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COLOSSAL BLUNDERS OF THE WAR

WILLIAM SEAVER WOODS

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COLOSSAL BLUNDERS OF THE WAR

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COLOSSAL BLUNDERS OF THE WAR

BY
WILLIAM SEAVER WOODS

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1930

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ORIGIN OF THE INVESTIGATION

It was on the battlefield of Verdun, just after the war, that Mr. Woods was impressed by the plain evidences of terrific needless slaughter. The bones of hundreds of thousands of the flower of the young manhood of France and Germany lay underfoot as the old Commandant of Verdun, his breast covered with decorations, took Mr. Woods over the battlefield, pointing out the spots of heaviest carnage, and explored the underground galleries of the forts, forbidden to the casual tourist, where these courageous fighters in 1916 battled in the dark till one party or the other was no more.

More than seven hundred thousand men killed or maimed there, with no real gain for either side! All those fine fellows sacrificed for nothing! What a tragic, terrific blunder! And if that was true at Verdun, was it not true elsewhere, too? A search through the records of the war showed only too clearly that throughout the conflict, from start to finish, thousands and hundreds of thousands of the world's bravest and best were needlessly sacrificed, not for sound military reasons, but by blunder after blunder and one piece of stupidity after another.

Now is the time to bring these facts out into the light

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of day, while the events of the war are fresh in our minds, to prevent their repetition in any future conflict, if there should unhappily be one.

A most gratifying feature of this investigation is the enthusiastic aid given by the Generals who commanded the American Armies in France. No better proof of their patriotism could be afforded than their willingness to lay bare the errors of 1917-18 in order to keep them from happening again in some future crisis. In time of war all criticism is hushed. When drums are beating and bugles blowing, every act of anyone in authority is hailed as the best, the wisest, the greatest that could possibly be. That time is now past, and we can profitably scrutinize the imperfections of what we once thought so perfect, in order to save, at some future day, the lives of gallant men the world can ill afford to lose.

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PART I

AMERICA'S COSTLY LESSONS OF THE WAR

"An untrained army invites loss and disaster."
—*General John J. Pershing.*

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CHAPTER I

HALF-TRAINED OFFICERS

A YOUNG American officer in the Argonne battle was leading his men across a bridge. Unknown to him, the bridge was under enemy observation, and the range had been calculated almost to a hair by German artillery officers. Courageously he started his company across in parade formation, as if they were on the drill ground. As they reached the center of the bridge, a German shell landed in the middle of the company and the casualty list got the names of a hundred fine American boys. This is a story the newspapers carried soon after the war ended, and a short time ago I related it to General Robert Lee Bullard, who commanded the American Second Army in France. "I have no doubt such incidents happened many times," he said. The young American officer should of course have rushed his men over the bridge in small groups at irregular intervals, but he was one of the hastily trained men who tried to get a full West Point education in a few weeks in a training camp—and it just couldn't be done. Somebody's boys paid for it.

General Bullard matched this story with another. The scene was in a different part of the same Argonne battlefield. The American forces were being held up

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by stiff German resistance in front of a French village, and the tanks were sent to their aid. Our men were intensely interested. They had never seen tanks before. They had heard of their marvelous advances right over the enemy lines, of course, and now they were actually to see them do it. Admiringly they stood aside to let the new machines pass, and the tanks waddled straight through the German defenses and took the town. The Americans were lost in wonder and could not say enough about it—until suddenly they found that the tanks, lacking the support of the infantry, had all been captured by the Germans, and the whole exploit was worse than fruitless, because our men did not know enough to follow and support the tanks! Another half-trained officer had lost an opportunity, lost a town, lost a squad of tanks, and lost the men who manned them.

Nor was this a lone case. When the American forces attacked the St. Mihiel salient they went into the fight with 417 light tanks, and although 40 per cent of them were ditched in the first hour by the rough going, the rest went forward and did splendid work. Among other things, they captured twenty-four 77-millimeter guns, but the infantry failed to coöperate, and they could not hold them. In fact, when the tanks turned back, herding the German prisoners before them, some of the Germans broke away and jumped to the guns, and the tanks were "shot in the back very disastrously." That was the story that General Rockenbach, Chief of the Tank Corps, told to a Congres-

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sional Committee after the war. The infantry support was "essential," he said, and "we did not have it." Again, "We took the town of Apremont five times on the 28th day of September. We had not trained with infantry. The tanks could take anything, but they could not hold it. We did not have the support." A little more training would have saved these losses.

Our Army had in round numbers 200,000 officers. One sixth of these had had some kind of real previous military training; one third were civilians who went in as doctors, chaplains, supply officers, etc., and the remaining one half were the hasty product of the Officers' Training Camps. They wore the uniforms and insignia of officers, they fought and died as gallantly as any men who ever followed a flag, but they couldn't do the impossible. They couldn't make three months in a camp equal four years at West Point. As General Harbord remarked to me, "You can sew brass buttons on a man, but that won't make him an officer." A very carefully prepared report sent to me from the Army War College at Washington says that thousands of men wore the insignia of officers after three months spent in camps with insufficient instructors. These same men were immediately given charge of the discipline and training of large numbers of green men from the draft. "It is not astonishing," is the solemn comment, "that many tragedies, on and off the battlefields, were induced by ignorance." Or, as General Pershing declared with equal solemnity before a Congressional Committee in Washington,

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"an untrained army invites loss and disaster." That is one of the big lessons that General Pershing derived from the war, and it is embalmed in the dusty reports on the Congressional shelves. It is to be hoped that no future war will give tragic point to it. General Pershing's testimony was sent to me by the Secretary of War to be used in this study of the war's lessons, and his words crystallize his experience in France. They might well be engraved on the walls of the Capitol as a guide for future legislation.

But of course not all our mistakes turned out so seriously. There was comedy along with tragedy. General Dickman, who commanded the Third American Army, tells about a British Chief of Staff who very politely sent a basket of highly trained carrier pigeons to the staff of a newly landed American division, only to be rewarded a few days later with a courteous note saying they enjoyed the pigeons very much! No doubt they had an excellent cook.

Meantime, at home, as we remember, all America was agog with spy-fever, and suspicious souls thought everyone who acted a bit queer was a German spy. So of course we had to have sleuths to dog the spies, and, at the right moment, grab them. As we do everything on a large scale, we had not only one corps of sleuths, but three. The War Department had one, the Navy Department one, and the Treasury Department one. As might be expected, the three sets of hawkshaws, being unacquainted, soon began dogging each other, and almost every day some eager tracker

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would suddenly find he had wasted weeks trailing an equally zealous detective in another branch of the service.

Perhaps the strangest error of this sort, however, happened in the Argonne battle just a few days before the Armistice, when our General Mac Arthur was actually arrested as a German at the point of a revolver by a patrol of the 1st Division. This was only a minor blunder, however, in the middle of a much larger one, for which the blame will probably never be located. A very high military authority told me that the order that started it was probably given by telephone and could not be traced. At any rate, on the night of November 6, the 1st Division, it seems, marched directly across the rear of the 1st Corps, hopelessly entangling and disorganizing the line of communications and creating endless confusion and chaos. Someone had had the fine idea that the 1st Division ought to have the honor of taking Sedan, so it was accordingly sent marching directly across the battlefield, regardless of everything. Even neighboring French divisions became involved in the confusion and sent in vigorous protests. Groups of the 1st Division were reported wandering in every direction, and one of them mistook General Mac Arthur for a German officer and brought him in, no doubt expecting large medals for the feat. General Mac Arthur's comments are not recorded, but General Liggett, who commanded the American First Army, is said to have characterized the movement of the 1st Division as

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the worst tactical atrocity that ever came to his knowledge. Luckily for us, the Germans at that time were thinking mainly about getting home, or else this chaos on a critical sector might have ended disastrously. As it is, we merely wonder who gave that telephone command. It brings to mind the famous remark of an unknown sergeant who said drily: "We had a nice little army until this war came along and mussed up everything."

These few incidents throw a vivid light on our fitness for war a year and a half after we had thrown our gage of defiance in the face of the best prepared military nation on earth. Many people have a tendency to be blinded by the fact that that great military power was defeated. "Well, we beat them, didn't we?" As a United States Senator said to General Pershing, "We made soldiers in three months, and we made officers in three months." Some of the costly results of that training have been noted above. Others will be described later. The full picture of our condition when we entered the war has never been drawn, and it is needed at this time when the tendency is setting in strongly to put us back in the same state again, in spite of the things that everyone in authority should know. No one wishes to make America a militaristic nation. Militarism is fatal. Germany learned that. America is safe from that peril, as the trend of our popular feeling is in just the opposite direction; but it is precisely that trend which has landed us unprepared in every war we ever had and has cost us the lives

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of hundreds and thousands of fine American boys, sacrificed needlessly when a little foresight and preparation would have saved them. Many of these facts have never before been made public.

The object of this study is not to point out the fact that we made mistakes. Every nation in the war made them, and ours were no worse than the rest. In fact, ours were merely the errors of inexperience, and the lesson they teach is to avoid that inexperience in the future. Aside from that, our army amazed our Allies, amazed the enemy, and amazed the world. As the years pass and international jealousies die away, European writers are now frankly saying that without our husky doughboys, the war would have been lost. Their feat of arms will not soon be forgotten by the world, and we may be very sure that no nation in the future will again lightly goad America into war. But despite all that, we should learn from our errors. War has its sad losses, but the losses that are caused by our own thoughtlessness and want of plain common sense border on criminal negligence, and now is the time to take stock of them, when no war cloud is on the horizon and the late conflict is still fresh in our memory.

Few who read these lines know that many of the troops in the drive against the Germans in 1918 had never fired a rifle before they went into battle. The plan had been to make the big drive against the Germans in the spring of 1919, but when the attack at Soissons succeeded in July, 1918, it was decided to make the drive then, and so the raw troops were

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thrown in. They huddled in front of the machine guns instead of scattering and lying down, and were cut down like wheat, due to lack of training. The green officers led them through the easy, open paths of the woods that were swept by German machine guns, when every trained officer should know that a path must be shunned on peril of death. The men should have crawled through the thickets and jumped over the paths one at a time. What was the result? Maj. Gen. Hanson E. Ely, who commanded the 28th Infantry when it took Cantigny, and commanded the 5th Division when it forced the Meuse crossing, told me that the casualties of the men in France were double what they would have been if the officers and men had had the proper training. Yet this was sixteen months after we entered the war, and many of the soldiers had never pulled a trigger in practice! Something was wrong, and it is our place to learn what it was, and resolve not to repeat the blunder.

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CHAPTER II

HOW THE MEXICAN EXPEDITION HELPED

WELL, things were not as bad as they might have been, at that. Some of the worst defects of the Army had been shown up in 1916 in the Punitive Expedition into Mexico and had been corrected as far as possible. Lieut. Col. C. A. Bach, Chief of the Historical Section of the Army War College in Washington, has given me some valuable and authoritative material on this point. At the very beginning of the Mexican Expedition the organization of a base was at first attended with chaos and difficulties. No such large bodies of troops had been assembled since the Spanish American War, and the arrival of materials at the Mexican border resembled the beginnings of that conflict. Flour, shoes, shirts, trucks and wagons came from everywhere and in all sorts of conditions. Truck chassis would arrive at one station and their appropriate bodies at another. But the difficulties were ironed out, as was also the hauling of supplies to troops. In the end the use of motor trains was brought to maximum efficiency over very long lines of communication. Again, there was no field wire on hand, and radio sets were without replacements because spare parts were of foreign manufacture! At the outset eight old airplanes were the

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total air equipment of the Mexican Expedition. They were all wrecked or unserviceable by July 1, 1916. Many important air missions could not be carried out, because of inferior machines or their complete absence.

Some 165,000 National Guardsmen were sent to the Mexican border and had the greatest opportunity for organization and practice. Here were enough troops to form half a dozen divisions, and if we had entered France the next spring with those divisions equipped and ready for action, along with the regulars, the war might have been ended in 1917, and all the frightful losses of 1918 saved. Does that seem an extravagant statement? It was made to the writer by General Harbord, who was our Chief of Staff in France from May, 1917, to May, 1918, who commanded the Marines at Chateau Thierry and the 2d Division at Soissons, and is as competent an authority as exists today.

An attempt was made on the Mexican border to mobilize the units there into divisions, but it broke down completely, so that it is surprising but true that none of our higher officers had ever handled troops in divisions before going to France. In fact, our Army was so scattered about the United States in small army posts before the war that many officers had actually never seen more than a few thousand soldiers in one place at one time, much less commanding forces of the size used at the front in France. Is it any wonder that the French and British commanders were nervous

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about giving a front sector to an American army, and wished rather to have the Americans distributed around among their own more tried and seasoned forces? Their fears were groundless, it is true, but they were intelligible. If the 165,000 National Guardsmen had been organized into divisions, properly equipped with artillery, machine guns, airplanes, etc., and kept in some kind of readiness at home for the great conflict that was at least plainly possible, then 1917 might have told a very different story.

Even as it was, however, the practice jaunt into Mexico revealed and cured a host of defects that otherwise would have made a lot of trouble in France. Just what might have been the plight of the United States had not these many results of the Punitive Expedition partially prepared us is not a healthy picture, remarks Lieut. Col. Bach. If these difficulties had been piled upon the turmoil of April and May, 1917, the sum would have been chaos. And if at the same time the enemy had been advancing inland from our coasts, instead of being held off in France by our allies, the result would have been horror.

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CHAPTER III

BLUNDERS OF MOBILIZATION

WHEN we declared war, then, we had only our small body of regulars in any kind of trim for action. The Selective Service Law was passed on May 19, 1917, and the first registration was made on June 5. Hundreds of thousands of men were soon inducted into the service and the hard task of training them began. They came from every walk of life—from farm, factory, forest, river, railway and office. The skilled machinist and the expert accountant drilled side by side. Good progress was being made, and the companies, regiments, and divisions were being hammered painfully into some kind of shape, when someone happened to think that the ranks contained all these skilled workers who could be much better used at their own trades in the prosecution of the war. Modern war is to a great extent a war of machines, and every skilled mechanic is worth his weight in gold. The great trains of motor trucks need expert drivers who can coax a balky motor up a steep grade or skirt a shell hole in the road by the breadth of an eyelash. Motor mechanics are as important as brigadier generals for trucks, ambulances and airplanes. Even bookkeepers are needed to check up the huge streams of supplies. Good cooks are

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prized above rubies. Modern war is so complicated that hundreds of experts are absolutely required. Major General John F. O'Ryan, who commanded the 27th Division, where every man appropriately wore the stars of the constellation Orion on his shoulder, gave a handy list in his testimony before the Congressional Investigating Committee. Experts were needed, he said, for "hygiene, sanitation, water analysis, medicine, surgery, chemistry, telegraphy, telephony, radio installation, electric repair, railway construction and repair, operation and repair of motor cars and trucks, cooking, stenography, drafting and designing, bridge and dock building, painting, clerical work, printing, and so on." So in the midst of the training the ranks were combed for these needed experts, leaving great gaps everywhere, which were filled with green men who didn't even know enough to salute. In divisions drafted from manufacturing states practically every non-commissioned officer was an expert mechanic, and with most or many of the non-commissioned officers combed out, the plight of such divisions may well be imagined. The training was set back again while all the raw recruits were brought up to the mark. Precious time wasted for something that should have been thought of and provided for months before—yes, years before. That was a very painful lesson. Once ought to be enough of that.

We all remember well the great cantonments located here and there about the country, vast camps in open fields with big wooden buildings housing huge num-

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bers of men. Many people thought them very fine. Much talk was heard at the time that the rough and ready life in the cantonments was a splendid thing to "harden" the men and accustom them to the life at the front. But this talk came from people who were themselves living comfortably at home. Brig.-Gen. Peter Traub, who, under Gen. Franklin Bell, was in charge for several months of these cantonments in the Department of the East and later commanded the 35th Division in France in the Argonne battle, has his doubts about it. Does such a life "harden" men who are not used to it, he asks, or did the exposure increase the malignancy and fatality of the terrible epidemic of "flu" and pneumonia that took such a tragic toll in those camps and on the transports? The Germans took the lives of 49,000 of our soldiers in France while pneumonia took the lives of 40,000 of our soldiers in the United States, so the importance of this question is apparent.

"I never want to see another one of those camps in America!" General Traub declared to me at his headquarters in New York City. General Dickman commanded a cantonment in this country and later commanded the American Third Army in France. He recalls in his book that more than twelve years before the war a recommendation was made that camp sites be made the subject of special study and suitable locations tentatively selected, but "nothing came of it, for the time had not arrived—if, indeed, it ever will—when considerations of the health and comfort of large

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numbers of soldiers, and efficiency of government service, could outweigh the demands of influential politicians for patronage." General Dickman speaks with very deep feeling, which is easily understood when he relates that at Camp Greene he had to see more than 50,000 men subjected to months of discomfort and some actual suffering, with training impossible for weeks at a time, because the camp was "bogged down in the mire of winter" so badly that teams of six mules were hardly able to draw empty army wagons through the mud.

If the prayers and earnest efforts of many splendid people and organizations in this and other lands are successful, we shall never have another war, but this is one case where it is "better to be ready and not to go than to go and not be ready." Last time we went before we were ready. Next time, if there should unhappily be a next time, General Traub declares his belief that there will be no cantonments as we knew them in 1917-18. At that time the National Army cantonments cost $199,000,000, the National Guard camps $74,000,000, and miscellaneous camps and cantonments $139,000,000. Next time, says the General, the men will be called into the ranks only as fast as equipment and training are ready for them, leaving the rest at home where they will have good food and shelter until they are needed. To house and care for them, the best hotels in the largest cities will be taken over, with their complete staffs of help, such as the Ritz, Biltmore, Plaza and the like in New York, and

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hotels of the best class in other cities. The guests can find accommodations elsewhere or return to their homes—which ought not to cause any great hardship or suffering.

Such quarters as these would keep the men in the very best trim, which of course is a consideration of the first order. The cantonments, too, took three months to build, cost many millions, and were useless after the war, while the hotels would be ready at once and could afterwards return to the needs of peace; so that the idea of quartering troops in the Ritz and the Plaza, instead of being an extravagant or wild dream, is really a money-saver, and, more to the point, a man-saver too.

America's mobilization of 4,000,000 men and the dispatch of 2,000,000 of them to France amazed the world, which never thought it could be done, and was a particularly bitter surprise to Germany, which had gambled too heavily on our inability to do it, and hence found her plans knocked into a cocked hat. First and last, it was this great feat of Uncle Sam's that sent William Hohenzollern to the wood-pile at Doorn, and it would be a big mistake to belittle it. But its very size, attempted in the mad haste of war, made every error costly, and errors in warfare are paid for in human lives by the heroic fellows who are fighting at the front—not by the men who made the blunders. We must not suppose, either, that America blundered any worse than anybody else. The huge and tragical

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mistakes of Germany, Austria, Great Britain, France and Italy make ours seem like flea-bites in contrast, but that is no reason why we should not review them and profit by them, in case another such frightful holocaust should come. One life lost needlessly is one too many.

We should not of course send two million men to fight a great army like Germany's with their bare hands, but we did send them without artillery, without machine guns, without airplanes, without tanks, without gas. All these things had to be supplied to this rich nation by our allies, who were already hard put to it to supply their own armies. In the early days some of our troops had to use British and French uniforms, General Bullard tells me, and our Army was so short of shoes that the feet of many of the men were frost-bitten. Think of the tons of shoes lying idle on the shelves of American shoe stores, while our soldiers, like Washington's men at Valley Forge, could not cover their freezing feet!

"The lack of clothing," says Lieutenant Colonel Bach, "reached a point that was alarming." Everyone knows that we had to depend on the French and British for our artillery. The same was true of tanks and gas. In the early days men in training camps used wooden guns which they made themselves, and used barrels on stilts for horses! The War Department did not even have adequate drawings and specifications for the Springfield rifle, because the Government arsenals had

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been making them so long that they did not need drawings and there were, therefore, none to be turned over to outside manufacturers!

Few realize, perhaps, that no combat planes of American make were used by our army at the front. In the Mexican Punitive Expedition we boasted of eight planes that were far from new then and they were used up at that time. We had some 15 or 20 men who could fly in all America. Of course we began at once to build planes and motors feverishly and spent money like Niagara Falls, but, for all that, we were unable to get one combat plane of American make to the front before the Armistice. It is true that 984 American planes were delivered in France and 213 of these were used at the front, but they were observation planes, de Haviland 4's, not combat planes. All the other planes we used at the front—about 500—were of French or British manufacture. As late as April, 1918, our few planes at the front (of French make) were not equipped with guns, and our pilots were making flights over the German lines every day with no means of offense or defense, a statement which would seem incredible if we did not have General Liggett's word for it in his published story of the A. E. F.

"The great lesson of the war," General O'Ryan declared flatly in his testimony in Washington, "was the complete failure of America to produce the material things of war in time to employ them." And he knew, too, for when he was asked what equipment his

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division used, he exclaimed: "British tanks, British rifles, British machine guns, British shoes, and British everything except coats. . . . British airplanes, British artillery, British horses. . . . Most of the breeches came from the British." Great big rich America was able to supply coats and some of the breeches! No wonder General O'Ryan could put his finger on the great lesson of the war.

The chaos noted above in handling the supplies of the Mexican Punitive Expedition bade fair to be repeated when we started shipping supplies to France. General Harbord was over there at that time and found things in such a mess that he expressed his feelings quite forcibly in his diary, which was published after the war. Up to the middle of September, 1917, no arriving regiment had yet brought its complete transportation. Wagon bodies came—with no wheels! Only one engineer regiment had its tools, and that was because the Colonel refused to march his men upon the transport without them. Trucks for General Harbord's headquarters were on the docks in Hoboken in June, and had not reached France in September. And as if the imps of darkness were out to make everything worse, just when every inch of shipping space was priceless, a ship that sailed over from France to America with 800 tons of sand as ballast "was allowed by an intelligent Quartermaster Department to haul that 800 tons of St. Nazaire sand back here on its return trip." And General Harbord explodes with: "Think of the shoes, the toothpaste, cartridges, socks,

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etc., etc., crowded out by that 800 tons of French sand. Wow—wow, and then wow!!!"

Meantime there was plenty of shipping room for "missions" of all sorts that came breezing in by every boat and nosed about and made general nuisances of themselves until the French were completely mystified at the strange way the Americans made war. Everyone who wanted to come was sent over, remarks General Harbord in his diary, unless he was a soldier wishing to join an expedition. "How sick of it all the fighting Generals are!" he exclaimed. Later, in July, 1918, the General was placed in command of the famous S.O.S., the Service of Supply, and brought it up to the point where it was the admiration of the French and British, who sent officers to find out how it was done. So the lesson was learned and the problem solved, but the plain, ordinary citizen would ask—why not in 1917, instead of 1918?

The answer to that also answers many other questions. Probably our worst lack at the start of the war was our failure to have any General Staff. That is the opinion General Traub expressed to me, and General Pershing said to the Senate and House Committees on Military Affairs: "Previous to the war our General Staff never really functioned as such. . . . At the beginning of the war we had no adequate organization to meet the situation that confronted us." Germany led the world in the excellency of its staff work, and France was next, says General Traub. The layman may not understand clearly the importance of this. It is

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the General Staff that coördinates and knits together the entire operations of the Army, and makes everything work smoothly like a well-oiled machine. General Traub compares the Staff to the spinal cord, which takes the commands of the various centers of the brain and sends them swiftly and accurately to the hands and feet to be put into action. So the Staff takes all the directions of the command and sees that they are smoothly and efficiently carried out. It is perhaps amazing, but true, that the American Army had nothing of that description. Reports from the front came to the Commanding General in any and every way until an operations staff was organized to bring order out of chaos. It was not until December, 1917, that a school for staff officers was started at Langres, in France, nine months after we entered the war. Now staff work is taught in all our Army schools.

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CHAPTER IV

FATAL IGNORANCE AND INCOMPETENCE

EVERY general I have talked with stresses very earnestly the point that training saves lives, and it may be perfectly possible that readers of these lines lost sons, brothers, husbands, fathers in the war who might be alive today if our Army had been properly trained. "If we had been able to train them a little longer it would have saved lives," said Maj. Gen. James W. McAndrew, Chief of Staff of the A.E.F., to the Congressional Investigating Committee. For, he said, the men showed "a lack of instruction in musketry," "a deficiency in the use of gas masks and in gas discipline," and "a deficiency in not knowing how to take care of themselves in the field." A tragic case of this kind was related to me by General Bullard. One of our divisions was on the south side of the Vesle River; the Germans were on the north side, and our men were trying to cross. Under the galling German fire it was human nature to avoid the ridges and go forward through the gullies. But if the men had been properly trained, they would have avoided the gullies like the plague, for the poison gas always settles into the valleys and depressions, and the safest spots were the ridges. Hundreds of men were gassed there—need-

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lessly—for lack of training. Or take another case related to me by General Traub. The Germans one night during the Argonne battle sent over some gas shells into woods occupied by our men. The Americans put on their gas masks until the gas had settled into the ground, then they removed the masks and went to sleep. Next morning when the sun came up it warmed the earth, the gas rose, and many of our men were gassed. It was a trick they didn't know, and the lesson was expensive. Thirty per cent of the total American casualties in France were due to gas, it is said, and if the above cases were typical, many of them were needless.

Another thing our men were apt to ignore—and be sorry later—was the German "sausage balloon." There it hung on the far horizon, looking no bigger than a peanut. But in that balloon was a German observer with a pair of field glasses of almost incredible power. As General Traub said picturesquely, they "could see a mouse in a field ten miles away, or a mosquito on a tree a mile off." On the Chemin des Dames sector Traub's brigade was with a French division. A group of French soldiers lay smoking near a dugout, and three American doughboys were approaching, coming down the Chemin des Dames. Away off in the distance lazily floated a German sausage balloon, no bigger than your thumb. No one paid any attention to it. Pretty soon a shell dropped off to the right. "A bum shot!" Another fell an equal distance to the left. "Another bum shot!" But now the

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German observer had the range precisely, gauged by the two shots. Then a "railroad train" was heard coming—one of the huge shells whose roar is heard while it is on the way. All the men scrambled into the dugout except one American, who couldn't run fast enough, and he was the only one left alive, for the German aim was so perfect that the shell entered the very entrance of the dugout. They had made the fatal error of ignoring that balloon.

It was another natural but fatal error to ignore the cameras of the airplane observers who sailed over and were gone in a moment. But they carried plates and films that recorded every little detail below, to be searched at leisure by German microscopes for hidden clews. Two of our big guns were so well camouflaged that the Germans could not find them. As General Traub told me the story, the Germans could tell about where they were, but not exactly. Meanwhile the two guns were working havoc in the enemy lines. Our men had been instructed especially to avoid making a path to the guns, and for a time they obeyed, but soon they grew careless, a telltale path was trampled across the grass, pointing like an arrow to the concealed artillery, then an enemy plane sailed over with snapping camera, the microscope got busy, and the next plane over was a bomber! Two invaluable pieces of artillery were blown to bits because the men forgot some very simple instructions. The same thing happened to a regiment's field-kitchen when the men forgot and trampled a path to the woods where it was hidden. There was the

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telltale path on the photograph, then came the gas shells, and the casualty lists told the story, the penalty of a little forgetfulness in the face of a watchful foe. These are all true incidents, vouched for by the highest authority, and related here to drive home the old truth that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, just the same in 1918 as in 1776, and to keep the nation from relapsing into the slumber of unpreparedness where we were caught this time.

Our infantry at times accused our artillery of firing directly upon them, due, of course, to lack of proper coördination, and General Liggett says that when he investigated such complaints in his command he "usually" found them unfounded. The other times, of course, should never have happened, and the casualties should be added to the too long list to be debited to lack of proper preparation.

Cases could no doubt be multiplied indefinitely. Imagine the mentality of the authority who located a hospital and an ammunition dump together on the opposite corners of a cross-roads! When a shell fell near the hospital someone suddenly awoke to what might happen if the next one hit the ammunition dump, and the hospital was moved quicker, probably, than any hospital was ever moved before in the world's history. But what a revelation of incompetency! Brigadier General Drum, who was Chief of Staff of the First Army, and who told me of this, told me also of two companies which gained their objective and found their front clear of the enemy. Should they advance and

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occupy a very advantageous position? They asked for orders. No reply. There was a long delay, during which the Germans occupied the front and fortified the position. Then came the order to advance. The companies went forward—and were wiped out. The location of this incident was given me in confidence and it is not told in order to blame anyone, but to warn America not to repeat the lax conditions that caused it.

Some of the half-trained officers did not know how to read maps. One of these, a Colonel in the Argonne battle, led his already tired regiment seven miles out of the way and brought them to their position utterly worn out. Of course he was promptly "canned," but how much better if he had been canned before he ever left America! Such officers, said General Traub in relating this incident, lose the confidence and loyalty of their men, who have no faith in them and so lose their morale and effectiveness. The best type of officer must not only know how to lead his men in the field; he must also know how to feed them, clothe them, keep them warm, sheltered, well and strong and in good mental and physical condition. Actual contact with men is needed for this, and our present reserve officers, while receiving valuable instruction, have little or no training in actually handling and caring for men, a serious omission, in General Traub's opinion.

After three days of the Argonne battle, three American divisions had to be taken out of the fight, one of them on account of its heavy losses, but the

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other two because they had become totally disorganized into something more like armed mobs than fine military machines. Two of the American generals I interviewed told me of this regrettable incident as revealing our sad lack of readiness for the war we had declared a year and a half before—General Bullard, who commanded the Second Army, and General Drum, who was Chief of Staff of the First Army. Neither named the divisions, and I did not ask, as it is not the purpose here to blame anyone for a condition that was really the fault of the nation—lack of training. When a division attacks, it moves forward in waves, and the waves must keep their distance from each other to avoid confusion. In both these cases this rule was broken and the regiments in the second wave closed up on the first wave and both were thrown into disorder. As one of our Generals remarked to me: "The colonels of the rear regiments must have thought the war would be over before they could get into it." So they rushed their troops right into the forward regiments and they were soon inextricably mixed. Under such conditions the modern means of command on the battlefield, that is, telephone, wireless communications, etc., could not function, yet they are essential to the control of large numbers of men placed under the command of senior officers on the battlefield. The more the officers tried to reorganize the men, the worse the chaos grew. Vainly the officers shouted their commands. Only the men right around them heard. Finally it was seen that the case was hopeless and the divi-

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sions were taken out of the battle. Imagine the result if the Germans had seized the opportunity to attack in the midst of the confusion. Any organized resistance would have been impossible. It would have been an armed rabble against German efficiency, and the enemy might very possibly have plowed through our front, cutting down our men like sheep, and inflicted a terrific loss and defeat. Luckily their thoughts were turning homeward about that time, and our divisions were taken out safely. None of the American generals in France had ever handled a division before the war, and perhaps the wonder is that more such incidents did not happen. The lives of many thousands of our men were exposed to terrific peril by this mismanagement, and it is something that should certainly never happen another time.

The failure of the colored 92d Division is well known, and General Bullard, of whose army this division was a part, thinks that we should learn from it not for the present at least to use negro troops as combat soldiers. This, however, is contrary to our experience with negro troops in previous wars, and I remember very well seeing a proud negro worker, after the war, who wore his croix de guerre pinned on the outside of his overcoat. He and others certainly did not get it for running away, and further study may solve this problem.

General Traub also told me that we should avoid another error that was made in the haste of 1917-1918, when the losses of various divisions in France

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were made good by filling them in with men from other divisions, men from other parts of the country, strangers who had no neighborly feeling for the men in that division, and therefore men who had no particular loyalty for that division, no "esprit du corps." General Traub's own brigade were men from New England, and when he took them to France there was left behind another brigade of New England men in the training camp as a "depot brigade," to be used as replacements for the Yankee Division as needed. A splendid plan, but did the Division ever get any of them? Not one. It was given as replacements men from the South, West, Middle West, anywhere, everywhere, while the "depot brigade" was split up and scattered as replacements among a dozen divisions where they were strangers and felt out of place. This may seem a small matter to those who have never given it a thought, but it is very far from small. General Leonard Wood told the Congressional Investigating Committee in Washington that "there is nothing which kills so quickly the spirit of troops as breaking them up and scattering them into other organizations." Yet that is precisely what was done. To do it showed a "lack of knowledge of a basic military principle," the General added, and "it did irreparable harm." "A division is exactly like a living human body," he explained. "You cannot assemble groups of arms and legs and eyes, etc., and say, 'that is a body.' They have to work together and be coördinated and know each other; that can only come from association, and when you violate that basic

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principle, you commit the most serious military blunder that you can commit." Imagine the feeling of a soldier from Georgia, say, who joins a Georgia regiment in a Southern division, and when he lands in France finds himself picked up and placed as a stop-gap in a division from the corn-belt or the Rocky Mountains. Maj. Gen. Edwin F. Glenn had a Georgia regiment in his division that was split up and scattered hither and yon as "replacements" until absolutely nothing was left but the flag and the Colonel. The Colonel came into headquarters with the colors and said, with tears running down his cheeks: "Here are the colors of my regiment. I have been with this regiment for twenty years, and my father was in the regiment before me, and this is the first time that we have had to give up our colors." What a mistaken military policy to create a feeling like that among our own troops; a mistake that should not be forgotten.

A lot of talk is being heard right now that "the next war will be won in the air." "That is a great misconception," said General Harbord, as we sat in the office of the President of the Radio Corporation of America and the General turned his thoughts back from the miraculous triumph of radio to the days when he was directing the immortal fight of his marines at Chateau Thierry. In a few crisp sentences the General viewed the airplane in the cold hard light of fact. "Planes can only fly in good weather, while the war has to go on in all weathers," was one of his succinct remarks. "Airplane observation is very uncertain, and so is bomb-

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ing," he added; "it is very hard to hit anything. We must remember, too, that a plane cannot capture an objective or hold a position or take prisoners, and for its rest, its food, its clothing and its pay it always has to come back and take refuge behind the army, which is doing the real fighting." In fact, General Harbord feels that airplanes have little or no real influence in deciding any war, and are overrated.

Much the same belief is held by Major General Charles T. Menoher, who commanded the Rainbow Division in France. After the war he was made Director of the Air Service, so he speaks as an expert. The Air Service is only auxiliary, he told the Congressional Investigating Committee, and "the only determining factor in any war is the infantry, which is the backbone of the Army. The only determining factor is the infantry soldier, who carries his musket and pack and trudges through the mud and rain; all other activities in the Army exist for the sole purpose to make it possible for that infantry soldier to go forward." Bombing by airplanes is very spectacular, but the actual effect, said General Menoher, "was not ever as great as even we were led to think it was—not anywhere near it." This brings to mind what General Sir Douglas Haig, the British Commander in Chief, said to Secretary of War Baker. "The Air Service will never win the war by itself," he said, "because the inaccuracy of aim makes bombing unreliable." He confessed to Secretary Baker that the British fliers had been trying for months to destroy an important

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railway bridge back of the German lines, and had hit everything else in the neighborhood, but had not hit the bridge. The Germans were also trying to bomb his railway line. They would come over and drop bombs on it and tear up the tracks and go away thinking the line was interrupted—and in two or three hours it would be repaired and the trains running as usual. So Sir Douglas did not think the airplane a weapon very capable of winning the war.

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CHAPTER V

THE REMEDIES

WELL, with all these lessons before us, what is actually being done to prevent the errors from being repeated? The Military Committees of the House and Senate, who listened to the testimony of the officers mentioned above, and to many others, welded all the wisdom thus gathered into a law passed by Congress in 1920, known as the National Defense Act. Thus for the first time a real military policy was voiced in legislation for the United States. That may seem a strong statement, but is official; it is the statement of Lieut. Col. C. A. Bach, Chief of the Historical Section of the Army War College. The provisions of this act are still soundly directing military procedure. The National Guardsman and the Reserve Officer are now an integral part of the Army of the United States. The citizen officer is required to be skilled in his leadership in accordance with his rank. No more will hastily trained officers be sent into battle to offer up their brave young lives, and those of their men, on the altar of inexperience. The citizen officer must undergo examination and attend instruction and practical exercises. Some forty service schools in the regular establishment are open to him. In the war our Army had in

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round numbers about 200,000 officers. Now about 100,000 young men are graduated every year from the R.O.T.C. courses in schools and colleges. Annually several hundred Reserve and National Guard Officers undergo the rigid courses of the higher schools of the Regular Army, and some 20,000 Reserve, National Guard and Regular Officers take correspondence courses in the technique, tactics, and art of the military profession.

That our present law is the first in our history to provide any real plan of preparation for war is also the opinion of Maj. Gen. William Lassiter, who commanded the 32d Division in the war, and succeeded General Pershing as head of the Tacna-Arica commission in the dispute between Chile and Peru. General Lassiter says it is gratifying to know that in addition to our small army of regulars we have 18 National Guard divisions recruited almost to full strength (about 500,000 men) and prepared to take the field almost immediately. The Officers Reserve Corps is a skeleton organization, a mold into which 2,000,000 men can be thrown for training.

But the 2,000,000 men would be worthless without the necessary equipment and supplies and without the industrial organization to keep turning out the vast stream of munitions and material of every sort that would be vitally needed. Have we provided for that, too? We have. There exists an Assistant Secretary of War who is charged with the "assurance of adequate provisions for mobilization of material and industrial

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organization essential to war time needs." In his office are found modern data and plans for supply and business coördination in time of war. Private associations of branches of the service are augmenting these efforts, mainly through the enlistment of the interest of the citizen officer. The Assistant Secretary's office has already allocated nearly 20,000 facilities or means of manufacture to various branches that have to do with the supply, and these are personally inspected by the branches concerned. If the products are found to be up to the mark, arrangements for production in time of war are entered into. Thus many industrial plants throughout the country have been actually surveyed, and have in large measure entered into tentative and specific agreements to produce various articles of munitions for any emergency.

A war reserve for equipping one million men has been the constant aim of the War Department ever since 1918, according to Lieutenant Colonel Bach of the War College. The World War left on hand a surplus of materials which then made the United States, from the standpoint of supply, better prepared than ever in its history. Military men saw an opportunity to hold fast to such an immense safeguard by replenishment of the worn and old, and they immediately set plans in motion to that end. The inventory alone of the vast mass of different commodities was a labor of years. Today the work is about completed, by the Army's efforts. A war reserve for a million men is on hand in regard to certain needful items.

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Contrast this with the situation when we declared war on Germany. Mr. Walter S. Gifford, who is now president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, was the Director of the Council of National Defense, and as soon as relations with Germany were broken off, "we requested the War Department for information concerning requirements," only to disclose the fact that the Department apparently did not even know what was needed. Mr. Gifford gave me the story as we sat in his spacious office on the top floor of a New York skyscraper overlooking the busy waters of the Hudson. "We asked for an estimate for equipping and maintaining an army of a million men in the field for a period of 90 days,—what would be needed in the way of clothing, shoes, machine guns, rifles, ammunition, etc. On February 28, two weeks later, we yet had no information. Finally, nothing forthcoming early in March, we got hold of a retired Army officer. We knew nothing about the requirements, but certainly we could not attempt to discuss matters intelligently with industry unless we knew what the Army wanted, so we sat in the office and made up an estimate of what we thought the Army ought to need—what it would take to equip and maintain an army in the field. That estimate was submitted to the War Department for correction, and came back about March 23d with but a few minor corrections—O K'd by the Chief of Staff." Thus it took precious weeks at that time merely to find out what was wanted. Today we have the necessary supplies, for the most part, ready and wait-

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ing, and if present plans are carried out, as Mr. Gifford understands them, this situation would not recur.

Why worry, then? Why isn't our situation excellent? It would be if it promised to keep up to the mark where it is now. But it has already begun to slip. Even the best plan in the world can be hamstrung by a lack of appropriations by Congress to carry it out. That is what is happening. Our national defense has to live from hand to mouth. There are fat years followed by lean years. What the General Staff finds it can do one year, it finds it must undo the next year,—a most upsetting and demoralizing policy, or rather lack of policy. Then, too, we have a good war reserve, but it lacks balance. An army must have all the needful things when it enters a campaign, as Lieutenant Colonel Bach very truly remarks. A soldier would be very little good with shirts and no shoes, or with a rifle and no ammunition. At present the country is short in tractors, 155 millimeter guns, tanks and small-arms ammunition. Even the stock of war reserve materials that we have is deteriorating in quality all the time. A certain percentage each year must be replaced in order to keep the balance and preserve a proper reserve. Our little army of regulars is so scattered about in the Philippines, Hawaii and Panama, or assigned to coast defense and militia instruction, that less than 50,000 could be assembled in an emergency to meet a foreign invasion,—too few to hold the invaders back while the militia was being mobilized. Yet the continual whittling down of appropriations keeps reducing

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their ranks year by year. The very National Defense Act of 1920 that gave the country its first sound military policy and its supremely worthy law for national protection, provided 280,000 regular enlisted men as a proper working force. They were none too many, and the country could well afford them. But almost on the heels of this legislation, an act of 1921 reduced the figure to 175,000. Later in the same year another act brought the total down to 150,000. By 1922, in the face of protests by the military experts, both civilian and army, still another legislation reduced the figure to 125,000. In 1925, appropriations had limited the number to 118,000. By May 31, 1927, appropriations had further reduced the 118,000 to 105,601. Little need be added to such a graphic slump. The last sum is less by 16,196 than the pitiful number on hand in the tragic moments of April, 1917. Among the thinking people in the United States, queries are arising: Has this ominous lopping ended? Are we tending toward one of our extravagant catastrophes?

The war taught us its terrible lessons, and an effort has been made to record some of them here so that we may avoid them in the future. Many an American home has a vacant chair that is empty today because of errors that were needless and should never happen again. Our national sin of forgetfulness has too often lulled us into fatal slumbers. Let us highly resolve that we will remedy this fault that has plagued us throughout our history, and that we will never again relax that vigilance that is the price of liberty.

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PART II

GERMAN BLUNDERS THAT LOST THE WAR

"Mistakes and omissions are inherent in human nature. He who makes the fewest will remain master of the battlefield."

—*von Hindenburg*

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CHAPTER VI

GERMANY'S "MASTER MINDS"

THE Germans were feeding their horses leaves and ground bark and the spectacled scientists were advising the addition of a little sawdust when the glad word came that a trainload of fodder was on the way. It was on Germany's eastern front in the dark days when great masses of Russian troops were hanging on the eastern horizon, the Austrian army was proving almost worthless, and the German situation looked bad. The big necessity in Russia's great open spaces was transportation, and every horse was worth its weight in jewels. The horses were starving, and most of them had reached the scarecrow stage where it took two to do the work of one. But the fodder train was coming. It was on the way. The Quartermaster General was none other than the great Ludendorff himself, and he had made all the arrangements. At last the train came in sight and rolled majestically into camp. In a moment the cars were opened—and the train was found to be loaded with seltzer water! Ludendorff has the humor and frankness to tell this story on himself, but how such a ludicrous blunder ever happened he doesn't explain. The poor horses had another supper of leaves and bark, and we may be sure that somebody

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in the quartermaster department had a bad time of it when the error was tracked down. Many of the horses died before the fodder finally came. That is the difference between a blunder in war and a blunder in peace. A war blunder costs lives.

If you make a mistake in mathematics in school, for instance, it merely means that you have to stay in after school and do the example over again. If you make a mathematical error in calculating the steel for a bridge or a skyscraper, a steel girder may arrive on the scene and not fit, with results that may seem tragic, but are not fatal. But if you are hastily calculating artillery ranges during an advance or retreat, and do the sum wrong, the shells may start falling in the ranks of your own men. And this not only might happen, but did happen, in cases that have been reported by men who were there, and no doubt in many unreported cases along those hundreds of miles of front during the long years of continual gun fire. Newspaper readers in the early days of the conflict may remember the story of the General who immediately shot an artillery officer whose shells were falling in his own ranks, on the hasty belief that he was an enemy spy. It is much more likely that in the stress of battle he made a slight slip in his figuring. It would be nothing strange. The entire aim of military organization is to reduce everything to a perfect system, like a well oiled machine. But the equally determined aim of the enemy is to blow this fine mechanism into a pile of junk, and churn it into chaos. Remember that it is even possible in the highly

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trained coördination of the telephone exchange to get the wrong number, and then do not wonder that in the inferno of a modern battle someone makes a mistake.

No nation had any monopoly of the mistakes, either, and no one country can point the finger at the rest. Mistakes, in fact, were inevitable. The country, like the man, who never makes mistakes, "never makes anything." Just to show that the very best are not infallible, let us take Germany's great national hero, von Hindenburg. Hindenburg early in the war was vastly amused to find that the Russians were sending out their army orders by wireless, a grand method of distribution which overdid things a bit by also spilling all their plans across the lines into the enemy's camp. In this way Hindenburg listened in on all their strategy. Later in the war, on the western front, the wireless way of distributing orders again occurred to this master mind, so he adopted it, putting the orders into code, however, so the Allies wouldn't know! Do you remember how the boys and girls in school pass notes written in code which almost anyone can figure out with a little ingenuity? Well, the Allies were soon reading Hindenburg's bulletins. In 1918 he sent out word that the French would attack at a certain time and place. His information was correct, but the French, warned by his bulletin, put the attack ahead of schedule, surprised the Germans, and carried all their objectives.

War is a huge game of risk and dangerous chance. If you guess right, you win; if you guess wrong, you are ruined. More than once the whole great conflict

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seemed to hang by a thread for any chance wind to blow victory or defeat. It was in those moments that wrong guesses cost the day, and blunders lost the war.

German blunders lost the war. That is one sure thing that stands out clear in the midst of all the uncertainties. The threadbare dispute about "Who won the war?" will be debated endlessly down the dim corridors of time, but there never will be any question about "Who lost the war?" Germany lost it by a series of the most "kolossal" mistakes ever known in the history of warfare. It was not one big blunder, or two, or three, but it was blunder on blunder and error on error.

Frederick the Great, the consummate master of strategy and the bright and shining military example to the German Army, knew how to turn defeat into victory; his German pupils in the World War seemed to know only how to turn victory into disaster. The world rang with the news of German successes from the very outstart of the war till its closing months, but they never brought victory. In the last year of the conflict the German people themselves grew sick of these successes, and became convinced that these hollow triumphs only prolonged the war, postponed the inevitable, and cost more good German lives. It seemed almost as if the militarists were driving home into the minds of the people the conviction that they were unfit to rule—blind leaders of the blind giving their followers the only cure that would open their eyes. It may be it required the frightful sacrifice of those red

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years to rid the German people of the military caste who only ruled and drilled them for the slaughter. If those leaders had led Germany to victory, they would be still parading the streets of Berlin, plotting new wars, but their blunders have freed Germany and ushered in, let us hope, an era of peace that will let the German people develop those finer traits that the world has always admired.

A few years before the war the writer, visiting Germany, saw a perfect specimen of the preposterous Prussian officer strutting along in Mainz, his boots shining like mirrors, his breast spouting medals, his little mustache waxed to two needle points, a monocle stuck in one eye, and a ridiculous swagger that nearly provoked a shout of laughter that would no doubt have been cut short with a sword thrust. If he had stepped upon the comic-opera stage, just as he was, his success would have been instantaneous. But stepping upon the grim stage of war, just as he was, he and his like found that it was not such qualities as they had that won through to victory. Just behind this officer as I saw him that day in Mainz was a statue of primeval man, half human, half beast, a striking image revealing from what depths the human race has risen, and as I saw the two figures I shuddered as I felt how far the race was slipping back. Later I was to realize it only too fully. Such were the military caste that threw the German boys in masses on the Allied guns. Such were the authors of the blunders that lost the war.

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The first German blunder was the mistake of letting the war come at all. This is not an effort to reopen the old question of who was to blame for the war—that is buried under tons of eloquence, and to reopen it now would only make the reader, quite properly, end his reading right here. The point is that the supreme military nation of the world ought to have had at least some glimmering of the mighty combination that would rise against them and finally defeat them. It is no reply to say that this and that calculation went wrong. In war a miscalculation is a crime. "You failed!" cried Robert E. Lee when one of his officers began to make excuses for a reverse, and in war that is the only reply. The conflict was hardly under way before the German people found themselves confronted by the most powerful military and naval combination the word had ever seen. Useless now to blame Italy, to blame England, to blame Belgium. Why did the supreme military experts of Germany fail to sense all this? What could they have been thinking of to plunge Germany into such a frightful predicament? Excuses will not do now. "You failed!" is the only reply.

They failed, and the Fatherland lost two million of the flower of its youth, sleeping in foreign lands, mostly in nameless graves where their own families cannot find them; they failed, and prosperous Germany was reduced to financial ruin; they failed, and the German flag, invading every sea and every port, was swept from the oceans as if by some withering blight; they

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failed, and the rich provinces of Alsace-Lorraine and Upper Silesia and the German slice of old Poland returned to their former masters; they failed, and the stream of German manufactures that was flooding the world dried up at its source; they failed, and Germany fell from its proud pinnacle to the valley of humiliation. That was the greatest blunder of the war. It is easy, we may say, to be wise after the event, but it is the business of rulers to be wise before the event, especially before an event of this magnitude. Why could not the master minds of the great German Empire see what everyone else saw as soon as the curtain rose on the great drama? Every newspaper then published tables and diagrams showing the relative strength of the two sides in men, ships, wealth and resources, and the merest glance revealed the inferiority of the Central Powers. Were the rulers of Potsdam so fatuous as to think they could whip half the world? Evidently they were.

Their claim was that "the war was forced upon us." That is, the Entente nations were arming, apparently for a future conflict, and Germany was forced in self-defense to fight when the chance was favorable, and not wait till her enemies were stronger. That sounds reasonable enough if not examined, but, as we all know now, it proved a disastrous piece of logic. True, Russia was adopting measures in the spring of 1914 to increase her already big Army, and we little realize here in America the apprehension that forever haunted all eastern Germany at the thought of great hordes

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of Cossacks pouring across the frontier. It was enough to make the Imperial High Command jumpy. "It is now or never, before the Russian Army is too strong," they may have said. When Theodore Roosevelt returned from his famous expedition to South America to explore the "River of Doubt" he said that savage tribes shoot their poisoned arrows at strangers because they are afraid. Show them you mean no harm, and they will not shoot. Germany was hemmed in between Russia and France, both taking measures to increase their armies, and was faced across the North Sea by Great Britain, furiously building dreadnoughts at unheard-of speed. Our poor human nature is pretty much the same in the jungles of South America or of Europe, and just as the poor savage of the River of Doubt is seized with fright and looses his poisoned arrows, the panicky militarists of all our doubtful rivers loose their forces of destruction.

But it is a blunder for the poor savage, just the same, whose tribe is wiped out by the white man; and it was a blunder for the mighty monarch now sawing wood at Doorn. As a result of this error, it is estimated that Germany lost 2,000,000 men in the war, 1,200,000 of them under thirty years of age, that 800,000 civilians died for lack of food, and that there was a decrease of births amounting to 3,500,000. Germany is also carrying over 1,500,000 soldiers on her pension rolls. Does not this explain the present sad state of the Fatherland? Her merchant shipping has shrunk from 5½ million tons pre-war to 3½ million, while her

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rival, Great Britain, has 19½ million. Her annual iron and steel output has dwindled from 14 million metric tons pre-war to 4 million, and her exports, which are what brings in the money, have shrunk over 70 per cent. If we turn to personal prosperity, as indicated, say, by automobiles, the French, with only two-thirds of Germany's population, own three times as many.

Such is the dark consequence of deciding that "the day" had come, when it really had not! The pre-war years were marked by almost frantic efforts of good people all over Europe to arrange arbitration treaties, hold peace conferences, establish Hague courts, and do anything and everything to avert war, but Germany held coldly aloof from them all, explaining that her only chance in war lay in a swift attack, which would be impossible under the peace plans proposed. Granting that as true, would it not have been a million times better, in the light of history, if the mighty German Empire had bent its great energies to help make all these peace efforts successful? William II and Nicholas II could have sold the peace idea to Europe, and today Nicholas would be on his throne and William's empire would be well on its way toward commercial supremacy. Even if we should grant the German claim that "the war was forced upon us," it still remains probable that with Germany's active aid, peace could have been forced upon Europe, and it is now as clear as daylight that that was the only wise plan. The other was fatal.

Well, the war came; the Serbian youth of 18 fired the shot that set off the European powder magazine,

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and the peace of the world blew up with a loud roar. Most of the nations were taken completely by surprise; their preparations were sadly inadequate. But not Germany. Admittedly the greatest military nation in the world, Germany was prepared down to the last button. In fact, her great military minds went beyond that, and supplied extra buttons. Every soldiers' trousers had a double supply of suspender buttons, for use in case some of the first set gave way on the march or in battle! It was the last word in preparedness. Would not the great masters of strategy who could foresee and provide against this subtle contingency also provide against every other? The best answer to this query is the fact that within a week of the outbreak of the war these masters of strategy had succeeded in raising up such a tremendous array of enemies as to make victory impossible. Probably never before in the history of human warfare has the world seen such a combination of genius and stupidity as was displayed by the men who held the destiny of Germany in their hands. The press of the Fatherland quoted enthusiastically at the start of the war the saying of Bismarck that "Our God will not permit the most obscure German to be conquered, much less a great country like Germany." Time proved there was some flaw in this logic, which may have been true in the day of William I, but certainly went wrong in the day of William II. The explanation may be that no power, human or divine, could save Germany under such leaders.

Surprise is one of the very first principles of military

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strategy, and the German military leaders acted upon it in their opening moves, but themselves had the surprise of their lives when the British Ambassador packed up and demanded his passports and Great Britain declared a state of war with Germany. That was not on their cards. It was not "according to plan." William II is said to have flown into a rage. "God punish England!" (Gott strafe England!) was the deep prayer of every German heart. We commonly call upon heaven to punish our enemies when we feel the job is beyond us, and this very prayer betrayed the conviction that Britain had spoiled the game, as, in fact, proved true. A German poet, Ernst Lissauer, expressed the feeling of his nation in the famous "Hymn of Hate" first published in *Jugend* in Munich, and translated by Barbara Henderson for the New York *Times*. It ran in part like this:

HYMN OF HATE

French and Russian, they matter not,
A blow for a blow, and a shot for a shot,
We love them not, we hate them not,
We hold the Weichsel and Vosges gate,
We have but one and only hate,
We love as one, we hate as one
We have one foe and one alone—
England!

You will we hate with a lasting hate,
We will never forego our hate,
Hate by water and hate by land,
Hate of the head and hate of the hand,
Hate of the hammer and hate of the crown,
Hate of seventy millions, choking down,
We love as one, we hate as one,
We have one foe and one alone—
England!

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It is not the purpose here to argue that the Germans were right or wrong in this feeling—the point is that the men who were running Germany at that time had no business to embark on a big war without knowing what the world's greatest naval power would do. This seems elementary. The Bismarck who said the Almighty would not permit a German defeat took very good care in a similar case to secure an explicit pledge from Napoleon III not to interfere when Germany attacked Austria. Bismarck proposed to have no surprise parties on his program except the ones he staged himself. The monarch who dropped him as pilot might well have taken a leaf from his book. How in the world did such a fatal blunder happen? The British entente with France and Russia was known to all the world. In 1906 and 1911 Great Britain had supported France against Germany in the warlike disputes over Morocco. But now it was thought Britain would take the rôle of innocent bystander.

This delusion was due to several causes. The principal one was apparently the reports of the German Ambassador in London that Britain "did not want war." This Ambassador, Prince Lichnowsky, was a close friend of Lord, then Sir Edward, Grey, the British Foreign Minister. Both were men of the highest character and an idealistic temperament to whom war was abhorrent. Of course each one talked peace to the other. Why not? To imagine Sir Edward saying to his friend Lichnowsky that Great Britain would very likely fight Germany would be to imagine the impos-

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sible. Hence in some way the militarists of Potsdam seemed to get the idea that they could trample all about Europe and Britain would look on in a sort of pacifist indifference.

Another thing that misled the German High Command was Sir Edward Carson's Ulster "army" which looked to Berlin like a British civil war, but really, as our Ambassador Gerard says, "had no more revolutionary or military significance than a torchlight parade." Then, too, at the last moment, Emperor William claims that his brother, Prince Henry, called upon King George in London, "who empowered him to transmit to me verbally, that England would remain neutral if war broke out on the Continent involving Germany and France, Austria and Russia." Further, the Kaiser added, in a note to President Wilson, "my Ambassador in London transmitted a message from Sir E. Grey to Berlin saying that only in case France was likely to be crushed England would interfere."

William II apparently concluded from these assurances that Great Britain would not interfere with his program. He thought he had followed Bismarck's plan and secured a clear field for his drive on Paris. But, like many a wiser man, he had overlooked something. How many big plans are wrecked by little oversights. Every business man can tell some prize stories of that sort. Well, here is one that changed the history of the world. You will notice that in all these inquiries and feelers, Belgium was never referred to. The German Emperor did not seem to think Belgium worth men-

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tioning, but it was the violation of Belgium that brought England into the war. A fascinating book could be written on trifles that have crashed empires. Hugo says a peasant pointed the wrong way and Napoleon lost Waterloo and his throne. William overlooked Belgium and joined the ranks of the woodsawyers of Doorn.

But, said the Emperor in his note to President Wilson: "Belgium neutrality had to be violated by Germany on strategical grounds." Von Jagow, the German Secretary of State, and Bethmann-Hollweg, the Chancellor, tried to explain this to Sir Edward Goschen, the British Ambassador to Germany. In fact, the Chancellor was so furious at England's protest that he called the treaty of Prussia, France and Great Britain guaranteeing Belgian neutrality "a scrap of paper," a famous phrase that rang through the world as long as the war went on. Von Jagow, one of the "master minds" guiding German destinies into a disastrous war, afforded an illuminating indication of his brilliance just at this time. It seems that Sir Edward Grey asked both France and Germany if they would respect Belgian neutrality. France promptly replied she would. Von Jagow said he was unable to reply, because his answer would disclose the German plans! Thus in trying to hide them, he made them as clear as daylight. A schoolboy would know better. In the middle of the war Von Jagow resigned on account of "ill-health." Some of the ruling clique went earlier, others later, but all were found wanting and disappeared one

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by one. What grief and suffering would have been saved if their incapacity had only been discovered and they had been retired before they lightly started out to conquer Europe as an autumn diversion.

Berlin figured the German army had to march through Belgium in order to reach Paris on schedule. "It was a matter of life and death for them," Von Jagow solemnly assured Sir Edward, for if they took the southern route around Belgium it would mean a "great loss of time." The Belgian route, then, was to be a time-saver, and, as it turned out, it saved about as much time as the motorist who tries to beat the express train to the railroad crossing for the same reason. "Our greatest disaster," says Count Czernin, Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary, was "the German entry into Belgium," for "had England remained neutral, we should not have lost the war."

Previous German wars had been rapid-fire affairs, and the time table for this one was to be equally swift. The wars of 1864, 1866 and 1870 against Denmark, Austria, and France were matters of a few days or weeks, and the soldiers were home almost before their families missed them. On the first day of the war William II appeared on the balcony of the palace and told his troops that "before the leaves have fallen from the trees, you will be back in your homes." Our Ambassador Gerard, who was in Berlin at the time, relates that, as the war wore on, someone remarked that William must have meant pine trees!

But many people, the friends of Germany especially,

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believe that Germany was really forced by the stern necessity of war to take her march across the level plains of Belgium for a swift drive on the French capital, instead of struggling through the difficult approach by Alsace-Lorraine, with its few roads, where the French could more easily obstruct her advance. Such defenders of the invasion of Belgium will be interested to know that there is good military authority for the belief that a different course might have won the war. Let us suppose for a moment that Germany, instead of striking first at France, had struck first at Russia. Belgian neutrality would have remained inviolate, and Great Britain would have had no reason to come in. With the sea routes open, a steady stream of food and munitions would have poured into Germany. Hindenburg's crushing defeats of the Russian armies would have been even more decisive, if that were possible; Russia would have been put out of the war in short order, while a defensive force held back the French along Germany's western frontier. Then France alone would be left to bear the full force of the Austro-German attack. Could the result be doubtful? Colonel Howland, in a military history of the world war which is used as a textbook in the United States military schools, points out with great clearness that the German drive at France violated the military principle of "economy of force." A defensive attitude on the west would have left a terrific army available to crush Russia and then turn on France. As it was, a huge German army became inextricably entangled in

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France, leaving too small a force to deal quickly with Russia, while Great Britain swept the seas, bottled up the German ports and brought the Empire of William II to the unenviable plight of a besieged city. No wonder the Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary called the great German plan of victory "our greatest disaster."

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CHAPTER VII

THE DISASTER AT THE MARNE

BUT as if it were not enough to start the war wrong, the really brilliant plan of campaign against Paris had to be bungled hopelessly into a defeat that will no doubt be ranked among the decisive battles of the world's history. Let us now take our way across Belgium and northern France with that gray-clad host, the mightiest army that had ever trod the globe. Whatever other errors the German militarists had made, they had turned out the most formidable fighting machine ever known. In courage and resource the German soldier won praise from his bitterest foe, the British, while in artillery, machine guns, airplanes, and all the machinery of war, the Germans were, if anything, ahead of the Allies. But this army, like some vast yet intricate and delicate machine, was directed by leaders who seemed to have an unerring instinct to misuse and mishandle it.

They started off, for example, with the idea, evidently, that Belgium would not try to bar their march, for when General Leman refused to let General von Emmich pass, the latter tried to take the heavily fortified fortress of Liege with nothing better than infantry supported by field guns, throwing thousands of his men

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in a useless sacrifice on the Liége forts. Then he brought up the big Skoda guns and reduced the Liége works to junk, as he might have done earlier. The reduction of Liége took from August 4th to 15th, every day precious to France, hastily forming her lines to meet the Germans, and August was nearly gone before the Kaiser's army passed out of Belgium into France, a fatal delay for them, as it turned out. Incidentally, various military authorities point out that if the Belgians had only destroyed the great railway bridge over the Meuse at Liége, the Germans could not have brought over their big siege guns till they repaired it, a matter of weeks, and still more time would have been gained. So we must mark one error there, it seems, for the gallant little kingdom of Albert.

It is not necessary here to recount again the agonizing retreat of the stubborn French and Britain's "first hundred thousand" across northern France, through towns made memorable for all time by the titanic struggle through their ruined streets. The German army was carrying out the great "von Schlieffen plan," schemed and dreamed for years, the sure-fire program for the capture of Paris, the defeat and rout of the French army and the reduction of France to a second rate power, henceforth to be at Germany's mercy. Von Schlieffen had died the year before, and if he had been there to carry it out, the war might have had an earlier and a different ending. By his plan the German army took the form of a vast sledge-hammer, the

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handle resting on Verdun, stretching westward across France, and ending in a "hammer-head" that was to descend on Paris, overwhelm it, and pass on, turn the flank of the French army and roll out and crumple it up in hopeless rout and defeat.

Military critics express great admiration for this plan. It might have succeeded. Friends of the Allies will remember the dismay with which they read of the daily advance of von Kluck, whose army was apparently always on the point of turning the Allied flank. During that entire retreat the terrible von Kluck was perpetually on the Allies' heels. Well might he seem to be like some black nemesis, for, unknown to them, his army was the powerful "hammer head" of the von Schlieffen scheme, moving with awful swiftness directly upon Paris. Every day told of his nearer and nearer approach to the devoted capital. What the French themselves thought of the situation may be seen when we recall that the French Government withdrew temporarily from the city. They clearly expected it to be taken.

Why did the plan fail? While all France breathlessly awaited the doom of the capital, the dread von Kluck suddenly changed his course, passed by to the east of the city, and, when attacked by the French, turned about and put back full speed for the Aisne River, many miles to the rear. The great von Schlieffen scheme had collapsed. The study of this movement in the years that have passed since then now permits us to see clearly how it was mishandled. The movement

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was entrusted to General von Moltke, a nephew of the great von Moltke who had commanded the Prussian Army and defeated France in 1870-71. It was working like clockwork. The troop trains leaving Berlin at the start of the war bore the inscription, chalked by the soldiers: "At Paris, September 5. In Paris, September 15th." This seemed to be coming true. The armies under von Kluck, von Bülow and von Hausen were sweeping down upon Paris like a whirlwind. Von Moltke was told that the British were so badly cut up as to be out of action. He was informed by von Bülow that the French retreat was like a rout. In short, he believed the French left wing was beaten. Thereupon he conceived a much grander idea than von Schlieffen's, and on August 30 he started to put it into execution. Instead of dealing a hammer-blow at Paris, he would attack both flanks of the French army at once, as in the grasp of a giant pincers, and crush it into annihilation. To do this, he took a special force of six divisions and 70 heavy batteries that had been intended for the attack on Paris, and sent them to the opposite part of the line, over a hundred miles distant, to break the French line south of Metz.

It is easy to imagine the rosy hopes and the general atmosphere of happy anticipation that pervaded the Great German Headquarters as these tactics went forward. Every meal must have been a happy feast, with "Hochs!" and handclasps. The war was nearly over; victory was in sight. To make the break-through on the French right, at what was known as the

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Charmes Gap, von Moltke attacked with terrific force from September 4th to 8th. Victory was fully expected, and the Kaiser and his staff actually took up their position behind the lines, waiting to go with the triumphant troops into Nancy and thence to Paris. It may have been at this time that the Kaiser shed his famous tears for the sad fate of France. For some reason, however, the stubborn French failed to give way as expected. The most violent attacks seemed to bring little result. The Kaiser and his party at last returned to headquarters.

Meantime, what was doing at the other end of the line? As hinted above, von Moltke considered the French left beaten, as he had drawn troops away from his armies in that region till the great "hammer head" was dangerously denuded. This was a direct violation of the von Schlieffen plan, and it was fatal. The result was that between Paris and Vitry, about 125 miles, the Germans had 900,000 men, while the Allies had 1,100,000 men, besides the Paris garrison of 500,000 more, giving them an advantage of 700,000 men there. Von Kluck and von Bülow had first been ordered by von Moltke to attack, and then later were ordered to stand on the defensive, and in the resulting confusion a gap of 25 miles opened between the two. Thus when the Germans were unable to pound a crevice in the French line on the east, they obligingly opened up a yawning hole in their own line on the west. The British and French promptly thrust their forces through this opening, and the great battle of the Marne was won

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and France was saved. Some think this the decisive battle of the war, and the Germans lost it by changing in the middle of the battle from a good plan to a poor one. We do not need to waste time figuring out who was to blame for it, for the German High Command decided that very promptly. Four days after the battle von Moltke was deposed and Falkenhayn was put in chief command. One von Moltke defeated France in 1870; another von Moltke defeated Germany in 1914.

A curiosity of this battle, which should be preserved for future generations, was its treatment in the official German bulletins. On September 6, the day when Marshal Joffre ordered every man to die in his tracks rather than retreat another step, and began his counter-attack on the Germans east of Paris, an official statement from Berlin said that "the Allied troops are in retreat between Paris and Verdun, and German troops are pursuing them." On the 7th, the French and British began to force von Kluck and von Bülow back, with the result that the huge gap opened between their armies, and the Allies advanced ten miles. A conference at von Bülow's headquarters decided that retreat was necessary. The official bulletin from the German War Office on that date says: "The German Army, constantly pursuing the retreating armies of France and England, has at last forced the enemy to give battle. The result is certain." The final rather cryptic sentence shows that a master of language was writing the bulletins. On the 8th the Allies gained another ten miles and on the 9th the great German retreat to the Aisne

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was ordered. Meantime the big drive on the east had broken down on the 8th with terrific German losses, although the German Crown Prince continued a vain and costly attack on Verdun until the 12th. The German Headquarters on the 10th, in its first official report on the battle, said that "in a battle east of Paris the Germans held their own in a heavy two days' fight against superior forces. We captured 50 guns and several thousand prisoners, but retired on the flank when the advance of strong hostile columns was reported. The enemy failed to pursue."

How such a bulletin ever came to be written has never been told. It says that the German army was holding its own and taking guns and thousands of prisoners, but retreated on a mere report that strong hostile columns were approaching, which did not even bother to pursue them. The name of the author of these bulletins has never been revealed. Perhaps they show more than anything else that a terrific storm was raging at headquarters over the crash of Germany's hopes of victory, and nobody was paying much attention to such trifles as bulletins. At any rate three days later, on the 13th, the bulletin writer, evidently encouraged by his previous effort, came right out and said that the German Army had been "attacked by a superior force" and after a battle of two days, with heavy losses, "the French troops advanced and our troops retreated, followed by columns of strong, fresh French troops."

That was his last bulletin, apparently. Whether he

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was sent to the front or to the rear is not known, but the next day von Moltke was cashiered, Falkenhayn took command, and a new bulletin writer took up the pen.

The new man had a brilliant idea. He announced that the details of the battle east of Paris could not be made public just yet, but "a new battle" was in progress that was "favorable to the Germans." As for the old battle, "reports from Paris and London of a German defeat are declared untrue." On the 16th he grew more positive about it. "The world is entitled to know," he proclaimed, "that there is no truth in the talk of a French victory anywhere. All other reports are false." Next day he came down to details. After again branding all the "French-British reports of victories in battles in France" as "untrue," he explained that "the German retreat of the western wing was a tactical maneuver not affecting the strategical position." And as if that were not enough, he said flatly of the great Allied penetration of the German line: "The French attempt to break through the center of the German position was victoriously repulsed."

If these quotations seem incredible, as they well may, a reference to any newspaper file will quickly verify them. If they were ordered by Falkenhayn, the new commander, they throw an illuminating light on the mental workings of one of the military chiefs who plunged Germany into a disastrous war. After Waterloo, Napoleon at least never issued bulletins denying that there was any such battle. After Chalons, Attila

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did not declare nothing had happened; and after Tours the Moors did not try to make out that Charles Martel had merely caused them to execute "a tactical maneuver." Cornwallis made no effort to hush up Yorktown, and Lee did not attempt to keep Gettysburg a secret. There must have been some reason for this unheard-of conduct of Falkenhayn, and we may find a hint of it in dispatches about this time from Switzerland, telling of crowds in front of the newspaper offices in German cities, shouting: "Tell us the truth! Tell us the truth!" It was the home folks that the militarists were trying to deceive, the people who furnished the cannon-fodder when plans went wrong; and here we see at the start the little rift that was later to grow to a mighty chasm and swallow up militarism, monarchism, and all the caste that had led the people like sheep to this frightful slaughter. The term "Prussian militarism" was not coined in England, France, or America. It was coined right in Germany, as no less an authority than Ludendorff himself informs us, and it shows the awakening of the German people to the character of their leaders.

Well, the great von Schlieffen plan had gone to smash. What next? Paris had been missed, but something else had been missed too. We may imagine the feeling at the Great German Headquarters when it was realized that another one of the huge prizes of the war had been within easy reach all this time, but they had been too busy to grasp it. The north coast of France, with all the Channel ports, lay open and

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exposed during the entire drive on Paris, and could have been taken with the slightest effort imaginable. What frightful efforts the German command made all through the ensuing years to reach this goal! How many thousands of brave German men were sacrificed in frantic assaults upon the British lines in vain efforts to reach those Channel ports which could once have been theirs for the asking!

Too late. The golden chance was gone—another blunder of the first magnitude made by the men who thought no one else understood war. German guns in Calais could have shelled the English coast and cleared a landing place for an invading German army that might have made the Versailles Treaty a very different document, and there lay Calais during those weeks with hardly a defender, but von Moltke could see only Paris. So now began a mad race for the Channel. Swiftly the German line was spun out northward toward the sea, but now everyone was awake to the situation, and no matter how rapidly the German line was extended, the line of French and British kept equal pace, and the race ended at Nieuport, on the North Sea, and the Channel ports were saved. Fast and furious were the German assaults on the Allied lines, regiment after regiment was thrown upon the British and French guns, only to wither away in their fatal fire. It was too late.

But was it? The correspondents at the front told long afterward of one crucial day when the celebrated Prussian Guard, the crack division of the Kaiser's

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army, assaulted the British line till there was almost no line left. Nearly every British defender was killed or wounded. As a forlorn hope the cooks, orderlies, hostlers and drivers seized the rifles dropped by the fallen and lay in a thin line knowing absolutely that the next charge would trample over them, the Germans would pour in a gray flood through the gap, and the Channel ports would be theirs. But by some miracle that charge never came. At the very time when the British line was vulnerable, the Great High Command evidently decided that it was invulnerable. Next day reënforcements arrived and the supposed invulnerability became a fact, but the day before they could have had the prize. Frederick the Great won many a victory when all seemed lost; Falkenhayn lost his battles when all seemed to be won.

But it must not be supposed that it is the intention here to prove that the World War was a mere series of huge blunders, or to show that the leaders on either side were a group of incompetents or mental defectives. To disprove any such slur it is only necessary to pass on to the events of the very next year—1915. Here we see the great German war machine working like the engine of destruction that it was designed to be. If the German people needed victories to revive their confidence in their military leaders, they had them now. Russia, it must be remembered, was the German bugbear. The dream of the terrible Cossacks burning and plundering their homes was the German's nightmare. Huge clouds of Russian troops were hang-

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ing darkly on the eastern horizon. The Fatherland was filled with forebodings; a few more first-class mistakes and the Russian deluge would flood the country. But there were no German mistakes in 1915. In the great battle of the Dunajec the huge Russian army received its death-blow. Its actual demise happened later, but for all practical purposes it was put out of the war in 1915, and the Germans were freed from the terror that had always haunted them whenever they cast their eyes to the east. The story of that campaign is fully told in all histories of the war, and Germany's part in it, at least, has no place in a record of military errors.

Later in the year Germany joined with Austria and Bulgaria in wiping the little Serbian army almost out of existence, and strewing their bones over the desolate mountains between the Vardar and the Adriatic. Not a tithe of the horrors of that red retreat will ever be told. But, like Blenheim, "it was a famous victory." Serbia, too, was out of the war.

To win these triumphs, Falkenhayn took men from his western front in France till he had the smallest possible force there that he thought would hold off the Allies. His calculations were so exact that the French and British armies, in terrific assaults, bent his lines, but could not quite break through. A smaller defending force would have been insufficient; more would have been superfluous; his reckoning turned out to be precisely correct.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE FAILURE AT VERDUN

THUS the laurels of Falkenhayn, at the beginning of 1916, were in full flower. Before the leaves on the trees of Germany turned color and fell in the autumn, those laurels were to fade and wither away, but in January no laurels ever looked more promising. Not only had he routed the Russians and scattered the Serbians, but he had a brilliant plan to deal France a mortal blow. Indeed, all unknown to the French, it was already under preparation. The great Russian defeat at the Dunajec had been accomplished almost entirely by the German artillery. The Russian losses were enormous, the German losses insignificant. This result had been achieved by the heaviest concentration of gun-fire the war had seen. The Russians were simply smothered, and the Germans advanced at will. Why not use the same plan on the French? Of course, the French were not the Russians, but there would merely have to be more guns. The point chosen by Falkenhayn for carrying out his plan was picked with especial cleverness, for at Verdun the French line had a great bulge extending into the German line that presented a continual temptation to squeeze it off. Verdun and its bulge were fed by a single railroad

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that could be easily reached and cut by German shells. Most of the bulge also lay on the German side of the Meuse River, which was crossed by only a few bridges which could be soon shot away. Thus the French forces there were in a trap. It was really too tempting a morsel to miss, and its capture would be the big event of the year.

So the work began of building a network of railroads behind the German lines to bring up the huge quantity of guns and shells and all kinds of supplies that would be needed. The concentration of troops, munitions, artillery and every sort of war material was unprecedented, yet the French, with all this going on right under their noses, never appear to have suspected anything about it. The airmen must have flown over the German lines nearly every day, yet they seemingly saw nothing of it. As if this were not enough, the Verdun defenses had been permitted to fall into disrepair, and although a regiment of engineers had been ordered to put them into proper shape, nobody seemed to be in any particular hurry about it, and the big German push, as a matter of fact, reached the defenses before the engineers arrived. As the German guns churned the defenses into chaos, anyway, perhaps it made little difference. However, it seems pretty evident that we have right here a French error in not discovering these immense German preparations, an error that might have cost them dear if they had not made up for it very promptly in a way that amazed the world, including the Germans.

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It is only proper to state that the official commander of the assault on Verdun was the German Crown Prince. Visitors to the battlefield can now see the house that was his headquarters, safely sheltered behind a hill from the French fire. It has a concrete chimney going up through the middle of the house, with a periscope at the top so that Frederick William could sit safe in the cellar and see in the mirror his brave men going to their death in that hopeless enterprise. No doubt it seemed a sad day to the owner of the house when it was seized by the enemy, but he now makes a very comfortable living exhibiting it to sightseers, at a fee suited to their means—"whatever you wish, monsieur." The Crown Prince was to have the credit for the victory if Falkenhayn took Verdun, but, by all royal traditions, defeat would be saddled on someone else.

Here we have perhaps the secret of the vast tragedy of Verdun, where hundreds of thousands of the very flower of the youth of Germany and France were consumed in that mighty "mill," as Falkenhayn himself calls it, which ground pitilessly from February 21 to July 1 of the Year of Our Lord 1916. The very soil around Verdun is like grist, it is so light and crumbly, and all over the miles of conflict it is filled with bones that were tossed about by the bursting shells during these months till no one can now tell friend from foe. At the time, the experts reckoned the total losses of both sides at about 400,000 each, in killed, wounded, and missing. The grizzled Commandant at Verdun,

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who was there throughout the battle, will tell you that the French lost 300,000 and the Germans 500,000. Official French and German figures, however, put the French losses at 460,000 and the German at 278,000.

Here is the famous "Trench of the Bayonets," where a trench filled with soldiers was caved in by a bursting shell, burying the men alive, with their bayonets left protruding above ground in a line, as if on parade. But what is not so well known is that bayonets and rifles protruding similarly may be found all over the field of battle, each no doubt with skeleton fingers grasping it down below. What a stupendous tragedy! And all to put a feather in the cap of a Crown Prince! No wonder the German people rebelled at last. No fine words could conceal from them the plain fact that this was one of the colossal blunders of the war, a blunder that reached into countless German homes and took a father here, a brother here, a son there, and sacrificed him on the altar of military pride and vainglory. Falkenhayn issued statements saying that France had been "bled white" at Verdun. No statements were needed to tell the Germans at home how white their country had been bled. Neither one had been bled white yet, as the titanic struggles later were to show, but Hindenburg must have wished many times in 1918 that he had the troops Falkenhayn lost in 1916.

How did Falkenhayn come to make this colossal error? In the first place, it was only human to suppose that what had been done at the Dunajec could be done

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again at Verdun, with enough more guns to make up for the difference between Russians and Frenchmen. At the Dunajec the Russians had simply been blasted out of their trenches by a tornado of shellfire. A similar tornado would do the same for the French. This logic was perfectly sound, and at the first attack the German shells simply blew the first line of French defenses out of existence. The German flood surged forward over them, and it seemed as if the Dunajec cataclysm was to be repeated. But right here came in the important difference that spelled ruin for Falkenhayn's calculations. At the Dunajec the Russians had hardly any artillery or shells to answer the German fire. At Verdun, the French had a powerful ring of forts, well manned and well gunned, and also a plentiful supply of the famous 75's, the guns that some of the French say "won the war." So the German guns could blow the French trenches to what are colloquially known as smithereens, but when the German troops came on to occupy the ruins they were met by a hail of fire that made advance impossible.

This, in a nutshell, is what happened over and over, day after day, during those long weeks and months. The wonderful French 75 could fire 30 three-inch shells per minute, and it is easy to understand how a battery of these wasps, accompanied by rifle and machine-gun fire, could stop the most determined advance. One French officer reported that his four-gun battery fired over 3000 shells in 45 minutes. No human line could live in that hail. The German Intelligence Department

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no doubt knew the French capacity for gun and shell manufacture at the start of the war, but may not have known how prodigiously it had increased. In February, 1916, when Verdun was attacked, the French rate of munition supply was 31 times as great as in 1914; the output of big shells had increased 44 times, the output of big guns 33 times, and the output of field guns 23 times.

But Falkenhayn knew that there were only seven bridges over the Meuse at Verdun to feed munitions, guns, men and supplies of all kinds into the bulge which he proposed to squeeze off. What he may not have foreseen was that Pétain, the French commander, would promptly build thirty-four more. Falkenhayn knew that his guns would command the railroad entering Verdun and stop it from bringing in supplies. What he probably did not know was that the French had made full and precise preparation for such an eventuality, and had ready immense trains of motor trucks which now were put into operation between Bar-le-Duc and Verdun and brought in ample supplies of every sort over the road that will always be known to every Frenchman as "the Sacred Way."

The result of all this was that the great assault advanced a few miles and stuck fast. Many, many other attacks on both sides all during the war did the same thing, and if it had ended then, it would have been just another one in that category. But it was the Crown Prince's attack, and it must be made to win if it took a victim from every home in Germany. What

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was meant as a trap for France became a trap for Germany, and the dread mill ground its terrible grist from midwinter to summer, till the great British attack on the Somme forced Falkenhayn to stop and send his reserves northward to keep the British from breaking through his lines there. The German press called it a great victory, and proclaimed that it had done all it was intended to do, but the real German verdict came on August 28, when Falkenhayn was relieved as Chief of Staff and Hindenburg was appointed in his place. Of course if this was really the Crown Prince's battle, he should have been relieved too—but that was to come later. The chief effect of the defeat was to reveal still more the fallacy of German invulnerability, and to put added heart into Germany's foes.

During the latter half of 1916, and beginning promptly on July 1, as if by agreement to divide the year, the two great antagonists exchanged rôles, and the Germans stood on the defensive while the Allies adopted the plan of blasting the enemy line with artillery and then rushing it with masses of men. Only the location was changed. The battlefield was now in the valley of the Somme. The French at Verdun for four terrible months had taught the Germans that these tactics of shelling and charging could not break through; now on the Somme, in turn, for four and a half months more, the Germans were to teach the French and British precisely the same lesson. Verdun had been the world's greatest battle; now the Somme outclassed Verdun. Failing to break through at Ver-

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dun, Falkenhayn said he had no such intention—"our object was to inflict on the enemy the utmost possible injury, with the least possible expenditure of lives on our own part." Failing to break through on the Somme, the British put forward the theory of "attrition." The war was to be won by attrition.

This theory was bruited about until the cartoonists pictured the day when only two gray-bearded soldiers were left, one on each side, who concluded to shake hands and call the war a draw. Humorous or tragic as the idea was, a long stride was certainly made toward it in that awful year. Omitting all other fronts, which were far from idle, the total losses in killed, wounded, prisoners and missing were roughly figured at 800,000 at Verdun and 900,000 on the Somme—nearly 2,000,000 total if we count all the many minor actions along the Western front in 1916. And nothing decisive was accomplished by it; it was merely "attrition!" No wonder the world wondered how long this could go on. No wonder that two weeks before Christmas the Kaiser suggested a peace conference. He made no blunder that time, and if he had continued right on along that line and accepted the Allies' counter-demand for restitution and reparation, he would be in a far different situation today. But the ideas of the antagonists were still too far apart for a peace conference to produce any result, and many more gallant men must fall before the German rulers could perceive the inevitable.

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CHAPTER IX

GERMANY'S SUPREME BLUNDER—UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE WARFARE

ANYONE might almost think that enough blunders had been made by the German militarists to satisfy an ordinary appetite for that sort of thing, but a sad feature of human error is that one mistake breeds another. So we come to the supreme blunder that, perhaps more than any other one thing, cost Germany the war. This was the unrestricted submarine warfare, which brought America into the conflict, fresh and vigorous, at a time when all the original combatants were worn to exhaustion and when it was, we might almost say, anybody's war. The tantalizing thing about it, from the German viewpoint, was that this possibility of America's entering the war was foreseen from the start, as clear as daylight, at the German Headquarters. What a dilemma! Here in Germany's hand lay the submarine which might starve England, sink those cargoes of American munitions, and "win the war in three months," as its friends claimed. On the other hand it might bring America into the war against Germany. Each side of the argument had its powerful champions, and between the two the Kaiser had the deciding voice. The military and naval chiefs were for

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using the submarine to the limit; the statesmen were against it, and the Kaiser wavered this way and that as one side or the other won his judgment. Perhaps it was beyond human wisdom to know in advance whether the submarine would win the war, or lose it. The logic in its favor must have seemed strong to gain the minds of Germany's leading military and naval experts; but before glancing at the u-boat's murderous and disastrous record, let us note the claims made for it by its friends and see how they came out:

1. They claimed that the unrestricted submarine campaign would bring England to reason within a few months.

It did not.

2. Or it would make England incapable of continuing the war.

It did not.

3. It would frighten shipping off the seas. Sailors would refuse to sail. Ships would not leave port.

On the contrary, every ship, steam or sail, that would float, was brought out of retirement, and crews were found to work them all.

4. America would still remain neutral.

It did not.

5. If America came in, the submarine would win the war before America could make her influence felt.

It did not.

6. America could not do much in the war anyway.

Ludendorff says America won the war.

When we look over this list of first-class errors made

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by the men in charge of Germany's military and naval decisions in the greatest war Germany ever fought, the idea seems to suggest itself that their place was elsewhere. They might have done splendid work in the trenches, or driving ammunition trucks, where their errors would have done less damage, but surely it needs no great mental acumen to see that German destinies were in danger in the hands of leaders who could strike zero every time on six big questions like these. A strange thing is that the civil leaders saw it all clearer and straighter than the militarists. The German Chancellor, von Bethmann-Hollweg, and the Foreign Minister, Dr. Zimmermann, were against the unrestricted submarine warfare from the start, but in vain. Zimmermann, of course, made one of the big breaks of the war later, and made his place in history secure, but we must give him his credit mark in the submarine dispute.

The war was just six months old, in February, 1915, when Vice-Admiral von Pohl, the Chief of the German Naval Staff, urged that the unrestricted submarine campaign be declared. He admitted that it was not in line with international law, and admitted that it might cause complications with America, but he charged Great Britain also with violations of international law, and especially with making a war of starvation against the German people, including old men, women and children, by blockade of food supplies.

Von Pohl seems to have been a rapid worker. The "inside story" is that he made out the draft of the

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declaration himself, hastily got the consent of the Chancellor, and rather took the Emperor by storm on a boat trip across the harbor of Wilhelmshaven. That was on February 4th, and before night fell the declaration was published. The new warfare was to begin on the 18th, but on the 12th a note arrived from Washington protesting against it, and on the 15th the Emperor issued orders to spare neutral ships. The Washington note had made quite a flutter, and, as von Tirpitz says, before the campaign "had drawn its first breath, its own parents were hurrying panic-stricken to throttle it." The navy chiefs were disgusted with the restrictions but felt that a splendid success was scored when a German submarine on May 7th torpedoed and sank the great Cunard liner *Lusitania,* drowning 1,152 of the 1,917 persons on board, including 114 Americans. About 40 babies and twice as many other children were drowned.

The shock of this frightful tragedy vibrated through the world. The acts of some Germans misled many people at this time into thinking that all Germans gloried over this disaster. It is true that Grand Admiral von Tirpitz telegraphed to General Headquarters urging that there be no compromise on the submarine question, and saying that a firm attitude would "increase our prestige in America!" Certain other naval and military leaders agreed with him. But what was not known outside Germany was that when the u-boat commander returned to port he was called on the carpet at General Headquarters and had a

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very bad quarter of an hour. On May 15th the first American *Lusitania* note was received, and a hot discussion broke out in the German councils, resulting in a statement by the Chancellor that he refused to be responsible for the campaign in its existing form. On June 2 the Chancellor asked the Chief of the Naval Staff to have large enemy passenger vessels spared, and on the 5th the Emperor ordered that all passenger ships, even enemy vessels, be spared. All this, of course, was behind the scenes, unknown to those in the outside world who thought the whole German people were behind the submarine campaign.

The German Navy, however, was for it to the limit, and continued to sink everything they could, within orders, until on August 19th the sinking of the *Arabic*, a large White Star passenger liner, with a loss of two Americans among the 50 missing, opened the whole question again. Germany promptly sent a disavowal to Washington and agreed to pay an indemnity and, behind the scenes again, orders were issued restricting the campaign more and more until within a few weeks it had practically ceased. This was more than the redoubtable von Tirpitz could stand. He had tried to resign before when the Kaiser had shown signs of wavering on the submarine campaign, but had been curtly told to stick to his post. Now he tried another tack, and when he heard that the Emperor was siding with the Chancellor against the u-boat, he reported sick. It was a delicate way of saying to the Emperor, "You make me ill," and at any rate it was so taken

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and his resignation was requested. Thus went another of the militarists' circle. "Tirpitz the Eternal," so called because he was eternally in office, and who had sent so many others into eternity, departed into the shadow of oblivion. His dismissal was a mistake, he frankly says: "I regarded my retirement as a very serious matter, since I knew it would encourage the enemy in his confidence of victory." He does not declare flatly but hints delicately that if he had clung to office Germany might have won the war—"but," he says, "who can tell what Providence holds in store?" It may indeed all have been for the best.

Thus ended Germany's first submarine venture, lasting from February to September, 1915. Its moral side has been discussed and threshed out so thoroughly that nothing could be added here, but there are probably few campaigns that ever were condemned so unanimously by everyone concerned. The von Tirpitz school of thought believes it failed from lack of vigor. No concessions at all should have been made, he holds. Instead of that, a wavering policy was adopted that got nowhere and gained nothing but ill-will. He sums it up by exclaiming: "Order, Counter-order, Disorder!" After the *Lusitania* disaster Tirpitz was dubbed by hostile critics the "baby-killer," an epithet that evidently rankled, and a photograph soon appeared showing the Admiral, with a benign smile, holding a baby in his arms. The baby was plainly alive, showing that the epithet was erroneous. Opponents of Tirpitz in the Government, in turn, condemned the campaign as a

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trouble-maker that would have brought America in if continued, and later events were to prove them right. Neutral nations condemned it as a murderous invasion of their rights, so when it ended, it apparently had few friends and no mourners.

Even so, however, it had set people thinking in quarters Berlin had not imagined, for the exchange of sharp notes between Washington and Berlin caused the Americans of German blood to ponder what they would do if the submarine brought America into the war. There could be "no question about their loyalty to the Stars and Stripes," flatly declared a German-language daily in St. Paul. "There has never been but one flag under which the German-American has fought. There never can be but one flag under which he will ever fight. And that flag is the Stars and Stripes," said Mr. Herman Ridder in a signed editorial in the New York *Staats-Zeitung*. Many similar expressions were heard all over the country. So whatever else the submarine campaign had failed to do, it had started something in America that certainly boded no good for the militarists of the Fatherland. Another miscalculation.

A certain lack of team work, too, among the government departments occasionally appeared, due no doubt to the nervous strain of the times. At one time, when the propaganda department, to intensify the u-boat campaign, was declaring that there were 16,000,000 babies in Germany suffering for lack of milk, due to the British blockade, on another page of

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the same New York paper carrying this item was printed a report of the German Department of Agriculture giving the census of the farm animals in Germany. By an odd coincidence, the report said there were 16,000,000 cows in the Fatherland, or one for each thirsty child. This made it evident that if anyone was keeping the milk away from the babies, it was not the British. Good teamwork would have cut this item out of the agricultural report or kept it from the foreign press.

Several big ships were sunk during the fall of 1915 in the Mediterranean, supposedly by Austrian u-boats, but the German craft were mostly idle. On March 24, 1916, however, the English Channel steamer *Sussex* was torpedoed, killing or injuring eighty persons. Twenty-five Americans were on board, and some of them were hurt. This immediately started another sharp correspondence between Washington and Berlin, ending in a complete back-down by Germany which actually went so far as to announce that the guilty submarine commander had been "appropriately punished." Imagine, if we can, the rage of the proud militarists of mighty Germany at having to come out in public in sackcloth garments and heap ashes on their haughty Prussian brows, while they apologized to the upstart Republic across the sea. It turned out later that the guilty u-boat commander was not punished, but the Admiral in command was punished for not punishing him. The German note to President Wilson promising to be good was sent on May 4, 1916, and the world

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thought that the danger of submarine frightfulness was past.

But it was far from past—it had not really begun.

The German naval officers were tireless in urging that the campaign be renewed. Tirpitz, from his retirement, proved that political death, at least, does not "end all" by bombarding the Emperor with letters urging him to reopen the u-boat attacks. The Emperor, Tirpitz has insisted all along, favored his policy, and William rather confirms this by saying that "the chief fault of which we were guilty was that our submarine campaign was started too soon and too irresolutely. We should not have begun it until we built enough u-boats to produce a decisive effect as it were with a single stroke."

Well, how many boats were "enough"? The Kaiser neglects to make clear this important point. It is authentically reported that at the beginning of the war Germany had only 19 submarines of an antiquated type, while at the beginning of 1917 she had 120 of the latest type.

An error of some importance right here is credibly related by a high official of the Central Powers who narrates that von Capelle, the successor of von Tirpitz, was approached by naval experts who told him that by stopping the building of all other naval vessels, five times as many u-boats could be built. Capelle loftily rejected the idea, remarking that "nobody would know what to do with so many u-boats

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when the war was at an end." Imagine his feelings later. Germany had 120 u-boats. Suppose she had had 600! Capelle rejected the plan; if Tirpitz had not "reported sick" and had clung to his office, would he have accepted it? What then? Of such slender threads is woven the web of history.

How interesting it would have been to be present at one of the conferences at the Great Headquarters when the naval chiefs were urging the u-boat campaign, Chancellor Bethmann and Zimmermann were opposing it, and the Kaiser was listening, questioning, arguing, and gradually coming to the fatal decision that was at last to wreck his throne and drive him into exile. We have no picture of any of these conferences, but we have a picture of another one, with some of the same actors, not with William in the chair but the youthful Emperor Charles. The scene is Vienna, and Zimmermann and Admiral Holtzendorff have come to confer with the Austro-Hungarian leaders about the submarine question. The date is January 20, 1917, and haste is urgent. Count Tisza, the Hungarian Prime Minister, is there, Count Clam-Martinac, the Austrian Prime Minister, Count Czernin, the Austrian Foreign Minister, who tells us about it, Admiral Haus, of the German Navy, and Baron von Freyburg, of the Austrian Navy. A long speech was made by the German Admiral Holtzendorff, and the interesting thing about his speech was that he revealed that the German western front was in a precarious state, German man-power was dwindling, and the u-boat campaign, as he pre-

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sented it, was mainly to stop the flow of American munitions across the Atlantic. The starvation of England was brought up as a secondary consideration. However, he guaranteed in so many words that England would be brought to reason in four months. If America came in, she would come in too late, he argued. America is not prepared for war, he said, as shown by the brush with Mexico, and President Wilson is a pacifist, so America will not come in. No doubt these were the same arguments that swayed the Kaiser.

The Admiral's eloquence, however, left his audience cold. The German Admiral Haus was the only one who agreed unreservedly with him. Counts Tisza and Czernin made speeches in opposition, picturing clearly the disastrous consequences if America came in with all her enormous resources. Doubt was cast on the success of an attempt to blockade England, and after the conference the Emperor Charles actually discussed with Count Czernin the possibility of breaking off the alliance with Germany and making a separate peace. Here we see that the wise heads in the Central Powers foresaw clearly the fatal results of submarine frightfulness. But Austria-Hungary was involved so deeply with Germany that separation at that time was impossible, and no real opposition was made to the German plan.

Formal announcement was made, then, that on and after February 1, 1917, all ships in specified barred zones around Great Britain and in the Mediterranean would be sunk on sight, and the unrestricted submarine

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warfare was on. According to the German expectation, unprepared America and its pacifist President were now supposed to shudder with terror and keep their ships at home. The British were to pine rapidly away and hoist the white flag. But in two days, on February 3rd, the American President appeared before Congress and announced that diplomatic relations with Germany had been severed. The departing German Ambassador pleaded for delay, but on March 1 the Administration revealed Zimmermann's famous letter to the Mexican Government suggesting alliance and giving Mexico permission to "reconquer lost territory in New Mexico, Texas and Arizona." As if this were not wild enough, Zimmermann added calmly: "The details are left to you for settlement." The President of Mexico, "on his own initiative," was to start a diplomatic flirtation with Japan to draw her into the game. What other plans the redoubtable Zimmermann had in mind to follow up these two brilliant strokes he did not reveal. He may not have been a master of diplomacy, but no one can say he lacked imagination. About this time he was discussing the u-boat warfare with our Ambassador Gerard in Berlin, and, growing excited, he pounded the table with his fist and shouted: "The United States does not dare to do anything against Germany because we have 500,000 German reservists in America who will rise in arms against your Government if your Government should dare to take any action against Germany!" Mr. Gerard calmly replied: "And we have 501,000 lamp posts in America,

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and that is where the German reservists will find themselves if they try to do any uprising."

Well, Zimmermann's letter supplied the last proof, if any were needed, of German hostility, and on April 6 the United States Congress passed the resolution of war with Germany.

But this was two months after the new submarine war had started. Zimmermann had said in January to Mr. Gerard: "Give us only two months of this kind of warfare, and we shall end the war and make peace within three months." Three months of it saw the war still going on. True, the German leaders were telling their faithful and suffering people that victory was just around the corner. "We hold the enemy in an iron grip!" shouted Dr. Karl Helfferich, Secretary of the Interior, to a committee of the Reichstag on April 28, 1917. "No one can save them from their fate!" he cried—"Not even the apostles of humanity across the great ocean! Our enemies are feeling the grip of the fist that holds them by the neck!" Alarmist speeches by Lloyd George in the British Parliament, to spur the British to greater sacrifices and stronger efforts, also of course fed German optimism up to the highest pitch. The British must accept "drastic measures" or face disaster, their Prime Minister flatly declared. The Government was only "hopeful" of conquering the submarine. As German hopes grew rosier, the British outlook grew darker.

These were perhaps the most somber days of the war in Great Britain. The German navy chiefs had

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promised to sink 1,000,000 tons of shipping per month in the unrestricted campaign, and that rate of loss was to put Great Britain out of the war. But as a matter of fact it never reached that figure. Dr. Helfferich in his Reichstag speech said the u-boats had sunk 1,600,000 tons in the first two months of the new campaign, or 800,000 tons per month, but the British figures put the total losses, for both belligerents and neutrals, at less than 500,000 tons per month.

The British were also fighting back at the submarines with every resource of that resourceful race. Depth bombs pursued them into the depths. Huge steel nets snared them like fish. "Chasers" chased them. War-craft were made over to look like innocent merchant ships, even sometimes with sailors in feminine attire idling about in poses as ladylike as they could do it, only to burst into a hail of shellfire when a periscope poked its scrutinizing eye above water. Shipyards rang day and night with the tattoo of the riveters, replacing the lost shipping. Two mighty nations were straining every nerve in a life-and-death grapple. A loss of a million tons a month would beat Britain, perhaps, but half a million was only half enough. Within two months Captain Persius, naval critic of the *Berliner Tageblatt,* began to write of the campaign with a significant tone of skepticism. He hoped the loss of half a million tons a month would convince the British that a further continuation of the war was unprofitable, although, he admitted, this result had not been attained.

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As if Germany were not sufficiently unpopular already, her u-boats now began sinking Belgian Relief ships, which were not only engaged in a purely humanitarian work, but were saving the German Government the expense of feeding the Belgians, thus providing more food for the German Army and civilians. A total of seven Relief ships, plainly marked and carrying safe-conduct passes, following a course laid for them and guaranteed by Germany, were torpedoed without warning in broad daylight. Three others were fired on but escaped.

Germany disavowed responsibility and said the u-boat commanders had been expressly directed to spare the Relief ships. But the moral effect was most unfortunate. Meantime the American naval forces had arrived on the scene, and the Yankee destroyers added their strength to the British.

The struggle that was to be over in two or three months went on through the summer and into the fall, and on November 1, Sir Eric Geddes, First Lord of the British Admiralty, gave some striking statistics to the House of Commons. Between 40 and 50 per cent of the German submarines operating around the British Isles since the beginning of the war, he said, had been sunk, and during the past quarter, the Germans had lost as many as they had lost in the entire year 1916, although, of course, they were also building them faster. Germany announced that 808,000 tons of shipping had been sunk in August and 679,000 tons in September, but Sir Eric said that the August figures

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were nearly twice the truth and the September figures were over three times the facts.

Every week the British published the number of ships of over 1,600 tons sunk, and while at first the numbers seemed ominous, at length they grew fewer and fewer until the Allied peoples began to feel that perhaps at last the dread u-boat was really being beaten.

The bulletin for November 14 reported only one ship of over 1,600 tons lost that week. In the same month von Tirpitz admitted the campaign was a failure. Captain Persius, expert of the *Berliner Tageblatt,* agreed, and excoriated the men who started this "piracy without mercy." Never had the u-boats been able to stop the passage of men and supplies across the Channel, and now the American millions were crossing 3,000 miles of ocean and the submarines were scarcely able to touch them.

February 1, 1918, marked a year since the campaign of submarine frightfulness had started, and the losses of Allied and neutral tonnage was figured at around 6,500,000 tons, or about half the German expectations.

In twelve months 1,033 British ships had been sunk, 270 of them being smaller than 1,000 tons, and 763 over that figure. France and Italy lost less than 1,000,000 tons in the year, and America lost 69 ships, of 171,000 tons, with over 300 lives. The following table of losses for the 12 months was published, made up of official and unofficial reports:

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Country	*No. of ships*	*Tonnage*
Great Britain	1,191	4,010,000
Norway	434	680,000
France	...	400,000
Holland	...	175,000
Italy	...	210,000
United States	69	172,900
Spain	35	80,000
Russia	...	300,000
Greece	...	90,000
Japan	...	30,000
Other Neutrals	...	200,000

The last half of the year of frightfulness, too, was only half as frightful as the first half. In the first half about 1,100 ships were sunk and in the last half only about 600. That tells the story of the u-boat failure. These figures of British, American and Norwegian ships sunk each month show as clear as daylight how submarine effectiveness dwindled:

Month	*British*	*American*	*Norwegian*
February ...	124	2	41
March	106	5	66
April	184	8	64
May	115	8	49
June	110	13	58
July	100	13	58
August	80	4	21
September ..	97	6	19
October	77	7	19
November ..	56	6	13
December ...	88	2	22
January	52	1	20

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New construction, too, at a rate the world had never known before, was making good some of this loss. In the last quarter of 1917 Great Britain was losing 260,000 tons a month, but she was building 140,000 tons a month. Then, besides, when America came into the war, the many German ships in our harbors were taken over and set to work for the Allied cause. As 1918 wore on, the submarine became less and less effective and the Allied counter measures more and more effective, until in the third quarter of 1918 the new construction outdid all losses by nearly 500,000 tons. The losses of German submarines were very heavy, and may easily have accounted for the failure of the campaign. Three months before the armistice Lloyd George declared that 150 had been sunk, but in July, 1919, the Berlin *Vossische Zeitung* admitted the loss of 199. Life in the cramped and perilous u-boat was described as everything that was undesirable, many of the sailors went insane, and it was in the Navy that the mutiny broke out which spread to the civilian population, overthrew the Monarchy and ended the war. So failed the campaign that was to crown the scepter of William II with the victory.

But before leaving the subject, it should be recorded that the campaign came within a narrow margin of doing that very thing. In fact, "we came within very little of losing the war," said the London *Economist* on September 7, 1917, "though few realized the imminence of our peril at the time." "That spring of 1917," it added, as if with a shudder, was "actually

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the most critical and deadly dangerous period" of the war. And it declared plainly that "if the losses of British and Allied merchant steamers by submarine attacks had continued at the rate recorded for April, May, and June of 1917, the Germans would have won the war before the year had closed." This is quoted with great glee by von Tirpitz to show that his pet craft might have won if his advice had been followed —another of those fatal "if's" that paved the Kaiser's path to defeat and Doorn. Tirpitz also quotes the British statesman, Chiozza Money, as declaring in the House of Commons in November, 1918: "In April, 1917, the German submarines were so successful that England would have been ruined in nine months if the destruction had been continued at the same rate"— a statement that seemed well within the bounds of probability.

Ludendorff, too, quotes Winston Churchill as saying in the *London Pictorial* of January 12, 1919: "A very little more, and the submarine warfare, instead of bringing America to our aid, might have starved us into absolute surrender. . . . It was neck and neck to the very end. . . . The more one knows about the struggle, the more one realizes on what small, narrow, perilous margins our success turned."

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CHAPTER X

FAILURE OF THE LAST GERMAN "PEACE DRIVE"

BUT if the submarine warfare was a failure, Germany's next move was a smashing success, although not quite in the way intended. That move was the great "Peace Drive" of 1918, and it brought peace. It began on March 21, to impose a German peace on the Allies, and it ended on November 11 in imposing an Allied peace on the Germans. Shall we say then that the great drive was a mistake, another blunder to add to the list? If we did, we should merely echo the verdict of some well-informed Germans. One of these home critics wrote after the Armistice in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* that the aim of the great drive was "utterly impossible of accomplishment," whereas "the only possibility was that of a purely defensive war." Ludendorff, however, the writer added, had inflated the people's minds by propaganda so that when the drive failed, they had "a terrible awakening." When the first thrust broke down, said this critic, Ludendorff should have "made the only possible bold decision and brought the front far back" and stood on the defensive. Allied critics, too, remarked at the time that the German army could have stood firmly behind the Rhine and beaten off the Allies almost indefinitely.

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Was it not a blunder, then, to go on hurling the German troops upon the Allied lines, now here, now there, in a vain attempt to break through? To those who take that view it may be pointed out that behind the army Germany was seething with discontent and groaning with hunger. Ludendorff's propaganda of early victory was all that kept them from open disaffection. In the previous July the Reichstag had passed a peace resolution in spite of everything the militarists could do to stop it. Now the distress was growing unbearable. Turn to German newspapers of that time and you will see advertisements of a new drug said to be "an excellent preparation to still the premature feelings of hunger and thirst," which had been used with the greatest success by persons "made ill by hunger between meals."

A long defensive campaign would never have been endured by the starving population. Ludendorff's bitter book makes no bones of saying that the German people were coming to take the same hostile view of the "Prussian militarists" as was held in Allied lands. Even high German government officials, he admits, cast the term "Prussian militarism" in his face. He lays all this to the diabolically clever "enemy propaganda," and says that "before the enemy propaganda we were like a rabbit before a snake." It did not seem to dawn on him that a people who had lost two million sons, brothers, and fathers (Ludendorff's figures), killed in a war begun, conducted, and now being plainly lost by these Prussian militarists, should have the sense to

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show any resentment or to put the blame where it belonged. So it may be a defensive campaign would have sunk the militarists even sooner, while there was at least a gambler's chance that a big drive might break through to victory.

It nearly broke through, too, as we all remember only too well! Why did it fail? Why did the greatest military thrust of all time falter and stop just short of success? Why did the superb German military machine hurl the Allied armies back, ten, twenty, thirty miles at a stroke, as if by the thrust of a giant hand, and then suddenly crumble into retreat and rout? A little examination of the evidence we now have again reveals the feet of clay of the great German colossus.

Surprise is one of the elementary qualities of strategy, it need hardly be said, so the great "Peace Drive" should at least have been kept more or less quiet. It seems, however, that every Tom, Dick and Harry on the Allied front knew it was coming. To make absolutely sure about it, the German newspapers solemnly announced it three and a half months in advance—and repeated the announcement twice afterward. The Allied soldiers in the trenches discussed it and wondered where it would strike. More important, Marshals Foch and Haig prepared for the blow by assembling large reserves, which were posted at the wrong spots, it is true, but saved the war by plugging the gap between the French and British armies when the Germans tried to drive their great wedge through the line. The German warning defeated the drive.

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Karl Rosner, the devoted chronicler of the Kaiser's every word and act, gave a touching description in the Berlin *Lokal-Anzeiger* of the scene at the Great Headquarters when the drive began. William II and Ludendorff bend their heads over the map for a few moments, then Ludendorff smiles at his Emperor and exclaims: "We shall knock them out, your Majesty!" Yet at that very moment the French and British reserves, assembled in reply to the German warning, were waiting to bring all these fine plans to nothing. Not far away was the Crown Prince, whose equally fine plans had been knocked into a cocked hat at Verdun in 1916. Now he was preparing his revenge.

No wonder the German High Command felt confident. When their war machine started its great "Peace Drive," it was "by far the most formidable force the world had ever seen," to use the words of General Pershing in his report. Military authorities tell us that the German force had 195 infantry divisions, of which 80 were in reserve, and to oppose them the Allies had only 172 divisions, of which 61 were in reserve, so that the German force overtopped the Allies by 23 divisions, making it possible to outnumber the Allies heavily at any desired point. At this time the American force had two divisions with the French troops and two more in camps of instruction. "Numerically," says Ludendorff, "we never had been so strong in comparison with our enemies." Facing General Gough's British Fifth Army of eleven divisions, with four in reserve, the Germans had forty-three divisions.

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On one stretch of 15 miles the Germans outnumbered the British by no less than four to one, so that to every yard there was one British bayonet and four German bayonets.

A fatal error was made, perhaps, in telling the Allies about the drive in advance, but the secret of its exact point of impact was well kept, and we all know the frightful shock of dismay that shook the Allied world when the German masses burst through the British line almost as if it were paper, and blasted their path westward day by day till it seemed as if nothing but the Atlantic could halt that terrible march. In seven days the Germans drove the Allies back forty miles. The captures of prisoners, guns, and supplies of every sort were tremendous. If there ever was a victory, this looked like one of the first rank.

But instead of that, it now turns out that it was a big failure. That is, it failed to do anything it was intended to do. Its aim, according to a German staff officer, was to break through to the sea, cut the British army into two parts, drive one part back upon the Channel ports to the north and hurl the other southward in disorder upon the French. This plan, he says, went awry from the first day. The thin line of British and French wavered and bent and fell back, but never did the Germans see a break where they could rush through, crumple up the flanks and split the Allied forces into defeated fragments.

They never saw a hole in the line that faced them, but it was there, yawning eight miles wide, fairly ask-

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ing for the thrust that would have done everything Ludendorff wished! The whole aim of the big drive was to break that hole in the line, and there it was, big enough to march an army through it, and the German leaders did not even know it was there! The German in command at that point was none other than Crown Prince Frederick William, who later took up horseshoeing on a bleak Dutch island until the German Republic thought him harmless enough to return home. On March 27, one week after the drive started, the Crown Prince captured Montdidier, and penetrated the French line on a front of eight miles. That was the decisive moment of the great drive, says our Colonel Howland in his textbook on the war, and the decisive direction was through the eight mile gap north of Montdidier toward Amiens. But no force was hurled through the gap, and next day it was too late, as the Allies had brought up troops and made all secure.

Even if they missed the gap, almost as fatal a blow to the Allied cause would have been delivered if the Germans had only pushed just a few miles further and taken Amiens, the railroad center connecting the British and French armies, but Ludendorff couldn't quite make it. Perhaps the British and French supply depots had something to do with that. The peppery Ludendorff, while scolding everyone in sight, takes a paragraph to rake the German soldiers for holding up the great push at every captured provision depot till everything eatable was eaten and every bottle was

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drained. So the Allied quartermasters may have saved the day, and we may have a great lesson here on how to halt big drives in the "next war."

Why did this terrific drive fail to accomplish its object? Perhaps there is no better explanation than the one given by the German staff officer mentioned above. He is Captain von Schwink, who was on the staff of General von Below, commander of the German 17th Army. Those who have access to the wartime files of the New York *Times* will find his statement reported in a cable dispatch from Germany in the *Times* on January 21, 1919. Captain von Schwink gives us an impressive list of German blunders that were enough to explain why the drive went wrong—and the German Staff, he says, knew the drive had failed at the very time when the Kaiser was sending out ecstatic telegrams of victory and the Allied world was sunk in the deep, blue waters of despair. In the north, where Ludendorff hoped to drive the British back to the Atlantic, he made little or no progress; in the south, where he made his big advance, it was considered of little importance. The artillery preparation was inadequate and ammunition was not supplied fast enough, it seems, but the biggest error of all, a twofold error, in fact, was that the German command underestimated the fighting qualities of the British and at the same time overestimated the qualities of the Germans. This is borne out by the war-books of Ludendorff and Hindenburg, who persist even after the war in rating the German soldier worth two or three Brit-

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ish. If the success of the campaign was staked on that, it needs no great military expert to explain its failure. Schwink mentions especially the British 25th Division, which beat off the attacks of five German divisions. As Schwink drily remarks: "The fighting value of the German divisions was generally overestimated." A rather disastrous mistake.

But to the Allied world, Germany seemed to be in the full tide of victory. In one more brief month the dread German storm broke again, now upon the thin French line along the famous Chemin des Dames, and swept it away like chaff, and the gray German flood rolled resistlessly forward ten, twenty, thirty miles, to and across the Marne, back again to their line of advance in 1914, so that the great Marne victory and all the years of fighting since then seemed gone for nothing. At Chateau Thierry the Kaiser's men were forcing the weary French steadily back step by step on the very road to Paris till the fresh and vigorous American Second Division stopped them and threw them back at Belleau Wood. To the German High Command this was an event of great significance, as it revealed to them another crucial error in their calculations. They had considered the Americans as raw, untrained levies, little better than an armed mob. Now in a moment they realized their tragical mistake. One American division had defeated two first-class German divisions. This statement was promptly published to the German army:

"The Second American Division must be considered

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a very good one and may even perhaps be reckoned as a storm troop. The different attacks on Belleau Woods were carried out with bravery and dash. The moral effect of our own gun-fire cannot seriously impede the advance of the American infantry. The American's nerves are not yet worn out.

"The qualities of the men individually may be described as remarkable. They are physically well set up, their attitude is good, and they range in age from 18 to 28 years. They lack at present only training and experience to make formidable adversaries. The men are in fine spirits and are filled with naïve assurance; the words of a prisoner are characteristic: 'We kill or we get killed.' "

But Belleau Wood was a small patch of territory and the friends of the Allies could only gaze gloomily at the war maps showing that huge sag in the French line where the great German steam roller had pushed it backward. Maps speak different messages to different people. The same map that made us all so blue in those days told Messrs. Hindenburg and Ludendorff that the German troops in this area were in a pretty pickle. As Hindenburg remarks, "We could not remain there permanently." In a word, there were forty German divisions in the Marne salient and only a single railroad line to supply them.

The Germans were in a snare. What looked to all of us like a huge success was really a huge mistake. One of the elementary principles of war, we are told, is the principle of security. Ludendorff and Hindenburg

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had violated this principle and had put their forty divisions into an insecure position. Listen to Hindenburg: "The lines of communication in the mighty semicircle were defective. They were just good enough for a state of relative inactivity, but threatened serious complications if a great battle lasting any length of time should flame up. We had only one railway, of very slight capacity, at our disposal as the principal line of supply of our great mass of troops to an area which was relatively confined. Moreover, the deep salient obviously invited our enemy to attack it from all sides."

Here, then, was the crowning military mistake of the proud Prussian militarists, the final error that brought the mighty German military structure crashing down upon their heads. They had fought themselves into an impossible military position. The irony of it was that their own homeland was ringing with exultations of victory at the very time when they perceived their predicament. Just a glimpse of the situation may be seen when we learn that gasoline could not be supplied to the divisions in the doomed salient, and they had to fall back on animal transportation.

The German army there was like a tiger in a trap. Like a trapped animal, it began to hurl itself this way and that, to break out. But just outside, watchfully waiting, was Marshal Foch, who sized up the situation perfectly. He figured that Ludendorff, to correct his perilous position, would make a drive for Compiègne, a railroad center that would give him more

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transportation into the salient. This expectation was correct. The Germans made a terrific drive at Compiègne on June 9, but Foch had gathered large reserves to meet it, and it broke down completely.

Their next drive, then, would naturally be an effort to take Rheims, the railroad center on the other side of the salient, and word soon reached the French commanders that it was scheduled for July 15. It would be repetitious to tell the story of that battle over again here, but, as we look back on it now, it does seem as if the German leaders might have thought the Allies would not stupidly expose themselves to the same kind of attack over and over. In this battle the French and American forces simply withdrew to the intermediate and second battle positions and let the German bombardment "of previously unheard-of intensity" churn up the empty front-line trenches harmlessly. Then when the German assault came, it met a stone wall.

That was east of Rheims. West of Rheims the French and Americans also turned back the German attacks. The effect of this German reverse was tremendous. Everyone in Germany expected the attack to deliver the final defeat to the Allies and end the war. The German Chancellor Hertling later confessed he fully anticipated that result.

What an awakening was coming! The Germans gave up their effort to take Rheims on July 17, and the next morning at 4:45 Marshal Foch launched his assault on the western side of the disastrous salient. Hinden-

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burg, who knew the salient was vulnerable, admits he was not expecting the attack. "It seemed to me highly improbable," he says, "that Foch would attempt a great offensive before strong American reinforcements arrived, unless he found himself driven to such a step by a particularly inviting situation or urgent necessity." In other words, he knew he was in a vulnerable situation, but did not expect Marshal Foch to take advantage of it! A fitting climax to the strategy of the militarists who thought they knew more about war than anyone else and made the supreme mistake of despising their adversaries.

It was fitting, too, like a scene in a play, that the spearhead of the attack that was to turn German victory into defeat, should be formed of two divisions of the despised Americans.

All the German errors and blunders of the war seemed to be brought to life and hurled at them here, as the young, eager and powerful Americans crashed through the German lines and pushed far beyond the objective scheduled for them. "Americans would never enter the war; they could not raise an army; or get it across the ocean; or be of any value as soldiers." Yet here they were, driving the Germans before them like sheep. Descended from all the nations of the earth were these young Americans. Turn back to the files of the war-time newspapers and run an eye over the casualty lists. Here are Murphy and Kelly from Erin's shore, here are Rinaldo and Noviello, from the land of the Cæsars, here are Cohen and Meyer, whose

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folks came from the Bible lands, here is Smulczunski from Poland, Swanson from Scandinavia, Paporasilupulos from classic Greece, Roszchuk from Russia, Yelonedes from Turkey, and many more from near and far.

But what strikes even the most casual eye is the recurrence of German names. Everyone who scanned the casualty lists during the war must have been arrested by it. The redoubtable Zimmermann was sure America could never fight Germany because the German-Americans would prevent it. Well, here were these splendid young Americans of German blood proving he was wrong. They were serving America by fighting for her flag and they were serving the old Fatherland, too, by driving from power the tyrannical militarists who had turned the land of Goethe into the land of Tirpitz and Ludendorff. President Wilson was telling the whole world in ringing messages that we were fighting the German rulers, not the German people, and the German-Americans were helping to oust the ring that was ruining Germany. And they made a record that silenced their critics forever.

Let us take just one day's casualty list, not one of the long lists, or we should not have room for the German names. The morning paper of July 24, 1918, has a list of convenient length—let us glance through it for descendants of the great Frederick's army that freed Germany from foreign foes.

Run the finger along down the column and we find these names:

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Grib	Doneworth	Lingelbach
Kolar	Leinfelder	Muttl
Oefstedhl	Glerum	Werhenberg
Schambaum	Goldbach	Wexler
Stengel	Grombecker	Wolff
Schmitt	Grotte	Strauss
Schraeder	Hartel	Benckert
Urbach	Herman	Lubers
Oberlander	Krengel	Neuman
Hershman	Germann	Roth
Kreiger	Stahl	

Here are 32 names of Teuton flavor in the total list of 128 for that day—one fourth of the whole! Of course, some of these may not have been of German blood (any more than the Schneiders, who made the French artillery), but most of these 32 doughboys and marines were no doubt Teutonic, and here they were ramming home victoriously the supreme blunder of the All-Highest War Lord who failed egregiously to understand his own kin overseas. Says Maximilian Harden, the famous German Socialist editor: "Why this unexpected defeat following performances so grand? Because a military commander, intoxicated with isolated success, flushed with the omnipotence of Cæsar, twice failed to conceive a proper estimate of America, as a factor." Chancellor Hertling, in the statement mentioned above, made just before his death, said: "At the beginning of July, 1918, I was convinced, I confess it, that before

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the first of September our adversaries would send us peace proposals. . . . We expected grave events in Paris for the end of July. That was on the 15th. On the 18th even the most optimistic among us understood that all was lost. The history of the world was played out in three days."

The German debacle needs not retelling here. The blunders of Germany's war-lords were bearing the fruits that might have been expected, but that evidently never were foreseen by their authors. When the German people decided they had had enough of such murderous masters, Ludendorff confesses that the revolution "came as a surprise." Foch recalls pertinently that Ludendorff helped start the revolution in Russia that spread to Germany and put an end to Ludendorff's rule. Poetic justice still occurs.

It seems possible, from this brief sketch of events, that the Prussian militarists may have defeated themselves, with more or less quite active and strenuous assistance, it is true, by the Allied nations of a large part of the globe. But suppose they had won, what then? Count Czernin of Austria in 1917 spoke to several German generals of high rank on the Western front on this point, and they declared unanimously that "after the war armaments must be maintained, but on a much greater scale." This war they compared with the great Punic War; it must be continued, and "the standard of violence must be planted and be the banner of the generals, the Pan Germans, the Fatherland party, etc."

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Why did they make such colossal errors? Devoting their whole lives to the study of war, and to the construction of the mightiest war-machine in human history, why was their prosecution of the war a series of mistakes that relegated them one by one to the scrap-heap as the war went on, and at the end blew the whole military caste out of place and power? We might say with the philosophers that everything evil breeds within itself the germs of its own ruin, but that is after all a mere expression that is a bit lacking in definite meaning. A plain, every-day cause of disaster is the failure to remember that the other fellow may be just as smart as you are, if not smarter. Every German plan and scheme seemed founded on the idea that the enemy were too stupid or slow to meet it. That sort of expectation was itself stupid. Prussian pride looked down on the rest of the world as inferior —a fine pose in peace, but a fatal mistake in a fight. This attitude was really at the root of the blunders that put the war-lords where they are today. They knew the whole art of war, they thought, but missed the chief rule of both war and peace that was told very clearly and sensibly by the writer of proverbs several thousand years ago: "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

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PART III

BRITISH AND FRENCH BLUNDERS THAT PROLONGED THE WAR

"Ah! Fatal words of this war! Too late in moving here! Too late in moving there! Too late in coming to this decision! Too late in starting with enterprises! Too late in preparing! In this war the footsteps of the Allied forces have been dogged by the mocking spectre of 'Too late.'"

—David Lloyd George in the House of Commons, December 20, 1915.

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CHAPTER XI

MISTAKES AT THE VERY START

THE British are always ready to admit their blunders. Nobody else riddles British mistakes so quickly as the British themselves. They have a half-humorous saying that "England always muddles through somehow," thus owning up that their efforts are apt to be a muddle. And that unfortunately hits off to a T many of their performances in the World War. No men fought more gallantly than the British, and for that very reason it is all the more pity that thousands and hundreds of thousands of those brave men should have been sent to their doom by the mistakes of those higher up who were entrusted with the task of saving the nation.

A glance at those errors should prove useful and instructive in helping to avoid that sort of thing in the future. In fact, that is how the British themselves feel about it, and it is not necessary to go outside the ranks of British writers to secure all the facts necessary for such a study.

America's unpreparedness when we entered the war might be explained on the ground that we had hoped to keep out of it entirely, but Great Britain had no such excuse. For years she had been a member of the

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Triple Entente with France and Russia which was opposed to the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy, and these two combinations had been on the brink of actual war several times. Anyone might suppose that the touchy state of the huge European powder magazine, with a German army of millions all ready for business located just across a few miles of blue water, would induce the British Government leaders at least to manufacture enough rifles for an army and keep them handy for an emergency. Or if that was too much, they might have had the machines in storage somewhere to make rifles quickly. But, incredible as it may seem, they had neither. Sitting right next door to the European volcano for years, they were short of rifles, short of artillery, short of ammunition big and little, and short of uniforms to clothe the men who crowded vainly to the colors. And the maximum output of rifles in Great Britain at that time was 9,000 a week, according to H. G. Wells. This famous British writer and expert observer saw volunteers crowd the streets of London in thousands, leaning against walls, sitting on the pavements, day after day, tired, hungry, trying to enlist, but unable to do so because the authorities were unprepared. And when they finally were enrolled, they drilled with dummy guns of wood or bent iron till rifles could be brought from Japan and the home factories could increase their output. "We had nothing but staves to put in the hands of the men who thronged the recruiting stations," says Winston Churchill, a member of the Brit-

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ish Cabinet. "Apart from the exiguous stores held by the regular army, there was literally nothing. . . . There were no rifles, there were no guns; and the modest supplies of shells and ammunition began immediately to flash away with what seemed appalling rapidity." And this while Germany's millions were on the march, equipped to the last bayonet and the last button! An adequate British force at this time, if thrown promptly into France, might have coöperated with the French army to halt the Germans at the frontier and spare France all the misery of four years of German invasion and occupation. But it couldn't be done with dummy rifles and half-supplies of ammunition, and the French had to face the deluge of flame and steel until the British could get ready. Somebody had to pay, and France paid.

When it came to that, however, the French themselves might have stopped the Germans at the frontier and saved some of their fairest provinces from invasion if they had not made a colossal blunder of strategy that nearly lost the war at the very start. The French made the big mistake of supposing that the Germans would come by the southern route, through Alsace and Lorraine, and so they concentrated the French armies to the south. Instead, the Germans struck by the northern road, through Belgium, and so found only a thin screen of French and British, which they pushed back like paper. Back, back, went the Allied armies, while all the world gasped, until Joffre could hastily drag his southern divisions about to face the Germans and

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luckily defeat them at the battle of the Marne. True, he pulled the war out of the fire by that stroke, but he had left a big slice of France in German hands, and it stayed in enemy possession till the end of the war.

Why did the French make this huge, costly, and nearly fatal mistake? The British knew better. For years the British General Staff in their war studies had foreseen clearly that if and when the Germans invaded France, they would come by the northern road. The Germans had built railroads right up to the Belgian frontier, with ample sidings far beyond any requirements of peace, for anyone to see. It was clear they were intended to bring the army to invade Belgium. The lesson was plain to all except the French, whose eyes seemed blindfolded.

Only one Frenchman of any influence was keen enough to see through the German plans, and detect exactly the route the enemy armies would take, and he was thrown out of office for his pains and all his warnings were disregarded. General Michel, a high member of the War Council, who was slated to command the French Army in case of war, reported his belief in 1911 that if the Germans attacked France, they would come by the northern route, through Belgium, and he urged making strong preparations to meet the thrust. But that was too much. It was preposterous, ridiculous! The General Staff knew better. Michel was thrown out. Joffre was put in his place and every preparation was made to meet the Germans on the southern route, the route they did not take, while

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on the northern route the mighty Teutonic hosts when they came outnumbered the French three to one.

The gray regiments were everywhere. The French divisions were mere islands in a German deluge. They were far outflanked on every side. Nothing but continual retreat saved them from being surrounded and swallowed up. It was a case of fight all day and retreat all night for both French and British until Joffre could rearrange his armies to fit the situation. True, it was done, but meantime vast stretches of French territory had been abandoned to the enemy, and hundreds of French cities and towns left with their people to the mercies of the German soldiery. And all because General Michel's report had been greeted with polite smiles of derision at a meeting of the French War Council on a pleasant July day in Paris in 1911.

The frightful losses of the French in the first shock, too, have never been understood in this country. Not merely thousands, but hundreds of thousands of the splendid sons of France were killed, wounded, or taken prisoners. These terrific losses were kept secret at the time, and later were lost sight of in the titanic mêlée of the great struggle. But in those later grapples what a difference it would have made if those slain regiments had been there fighting gallantly by the side of their comrades, instead of resting in the grave, lost in a needless sacrifice! Losses were inevitable, sacrifices were inevitable, of course, but not such wholesale slaughter as heaped the battlefields with the flower of French youth.

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And the whole tragedy might be said to be due to the hypnotism of a catchy phrase. The wizardry of words seems to have a bewitching effect on the French mind. "The best defense is attack," was the fatal phrase that ruled French tactics. That may be good policy in a fist-fight or a duel with broadswords, but in a modern war it is merely a gallant way to commit suicide. It means, in plain English, "Throw your men on the enemy's guns." The enemy could not ask anything better. No army in the world ever had so many machine guns as the Germans had when they invaded France. Their only fear was that the French might be sheltered behind breastworks or entrenchments where the machine guns could not get at them.

Imagine their joy, then, when they saw the French coming on the run in massed formation, to be cut down like wheat. Dressed in vivid uniforms of blue and red, with the officers in black and gold, as if to offer the German marksmen every opportunity, the French cried "Forward!" "Vive la France!" "The bayonet! The bayonet!" and rushed gallantly to their doom. Not less than 300,000 men were killed, wounded, or captured in what is known as the Battle of the Frontiers.

It was only a few weeks later that the French learned to dig trenches and found that troops in a ditch could beat off assaults that they could never repel above ground. But it was too late to save those 300,000 of their comrades. They might easily have learned the value of entrenchments by glancing over the story of the American Civil War, where entrench-

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ments were used by both sides, but even that lesson went for nothing. It had to be learned in the bitter school of disaster, like the rejected report of General Michel. If these two lessons had been learned before the war, instead of later, it seems as clear as crystal that the French armies would have entrenched themselves strongly just inside their frontier, as they had plenty of time to do while Belgium delayed the Germans, and the Kaiser's army would never have got into France at all. The French fought with a heroism that the world will never forget, but that is all the more reason why no son of France and no foot of French soil should have been sacrificed needlessly. The world may happily never see another war, but if one should come, these tragic errors should never be repeated.

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CHAPTER XII

BRITISH NAVAL TRAGEDIES

LET us now turn to the sunny waters of the Mediterranean. There, on a late afternoon in August, before the war was a week old, two German cruisers might have been seen steaming boldly out of the harbor of Messina, bands playing, flags flying, decks cleared for action, gun crews at their stations, everything ready for battle. The German captains were expecting a fight, and, in fact, as they well knew, the Mediterranean was swarming with British cruisers, the British Admiral knew where the two German craft were, and he had been ordered explicitly to get them. Yet the strange fact must be recorded that when these two German captains emerged into the Mediterranean, they saw only one little British cruiser, too small to harm them, and they sailed swiftly and safely away to the Dardanelles without the slightest interference from anyone. True, the air was fairly crackling and snapping over their heads with wireless messages flying back and forth among the British ships, but amid all the excitement and to-do, the *Goeben* and *Breslau* slipped through the British fingers and were gone.

And it was no ordinary escape, either, for the formidable *Goeben* and her mate were bound for Con-

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stantinople, where they clinched the German hold on Turkey, helped drag Turkey into the war, raked the Russian ports and shipping in the Black Sea with flaming destruction, and helped the awful work of turning the Near East into a realistic imitation of the inferno. As one British writer puts it vividly, the *Goeben,* as she fled swiftly to the Dardanelles, "carried with her for the peoples of the East more slaughter, more misery, and more ruin that has ever before been borne within the compass of a ship."

How in the world, then, did the two German craft, after being located absolutely and precisely by the British, manage to run right through the ring of enemy cruisers just as if they had not been there at all? Explanations were voluminous, courts martial probed the whole matter deeply and solemnly, the British Commander in Chief, Admiral Sir Berkeley Milne, wrote a book about it, with the old, old result—"Nobody to blame." Admiral Milne with his strong squadron was on the other side of Sicily when the Germans came out, because he thought they would come that way to sink the French transports, but instead of that they went in the opposite direction, and the French transports, unknown to the Admiral, had decided not to sail anyway, so the Admiral was badly out of his reckoning on both counts.

The other British Admiral, Troubridge, with six cruisers and ten destroyers, could have headed off the two German ships, but decided that his force was not strong enough to match them. A court martial said

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he was right, but Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the British Admiralty, thinks he should have made a try at the Germans, at least.

It is not our place here to question the decisions of the British Navy, but we may be permitted to notice the quite different ideas that seemed to be held by two brothers who happened to be on the scene, members of the Kelly family, John and Howard by name. Howard, in command of the light cruiser *Gloucester,* was the one who discovered that the Germans were at Messina and gave the alarm. He met them with his little warship when they came out, wirelessed the news to the commanding Admiral, and then, at the greatest risk, followed the German ships all night and all the next day, signaling their position and course by radio until ordered by the Admiral to give up his perilous chase of the powerful and swift enemy warships that could have turned and blown him out of the water at will.

John, in the meantime, in command of the cruiser *Dublin,* with two destroyers, was coming full speed from Malta and requested permission from the Admiral to attack the *Goeben* and *Breslau* all by himself, like David attacking two Goliaths, but permission was of course refused. Such was the part played in the drama by the two brothers, and as we read the excuses and explanations and vindications of those who failed, we can imagine a very different story and a far different result if the two Admirals that day had been John and Howard Kelly.

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The escape of the *Goeben* from the British cruisers was a feather in the German cap, and a loss of "face," as the Chinese would say, for the British, but no men or ships were lost. The next British error at sea, however, was a costly affair. Over 2,000 lives paid the price of it, partly naval reservists of an age when men have wives and children to live for, and partly young naval cadets who were posted on the fatal ships because it was thought they were least likely to be attacked. The doomed craft were the *Aboukir,* the *Hogue,* and the *Cressy,* three cruisers of a rather oldish type that were patrolling the "narrow seas" at the eastern end of the English Channel. To and fro they cruised day after day on sentry go until the stealthy German submarine watchers could tell you just where to find them at almost any time. In fact, even the officers of the British Grand Fleet began to call them the "live-bait squadron."

One day Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, overheard this ominous nickname, saw in a moment the risk they were in, and ordered them taken off their dangerous post. As he well says, "In war all repetitions are perilous. You can do many things with impunity if you do not keep on doing them over and over again." Thus the danger was realized, but the cruisers were kept on patrol because a terrific storm came up that drove the British destroyers to shelter, and it was argued that if it was too rough for destroyers to be out, then it was likewise too rough for submarines.

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The logic was perfect, but the weather cleared up. Sensing the cruisers' peril, eight destroyers were sent full speed to protect them, but it was too late. Early on the morning of September 22nd Lieutenant Weddingen, commanding a German u-boat, stole silently upon the three cruisers as they were steaming slowly northward and torpedoed the *Aboukir,* which sank in 25 minutes. That was bad enough, and it might have been the only disastrous result of all the mismanagement if the captains of the *Hogue* and the *Cressy* had not added still more unwisdom to what had gone before. As if to give Weddingen every opportunity he could possibly ask, the two cruisers, "with chivalrous simplicity," as Churchill remarks, came up to rescue the survivors, and stood stock still directly in front of the German torpedo tubes! In a very few minutes there was nothing but floating pieces of wreckage to show that the three ships had ever existed. Many other British ships were sunk by the u-boats, of course, but never again was there such a conspiracy of errors by everybody concerned, with the brave men who merely obey orders as the victims. The lesson was learned, but for those poor fellows it was too late. Excuses are not accepted in the hard school of war.

But the evil fate that pursues errors of judgment had still another hard blow in store for the British Navy. Five German cruisers were ranging the Pacific, two of them powerful craft capable of meeting anything less than a battleship or battle cruiser. No one knew where they might turn up, so every British squad-

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ron in those waters had to be able to fight or run. It was a time of intense anxiety. Any British port in the Pacific might be shelled, any steamer, big or little, might be taken or sunk. A battle was certain, but no one knew when or where. One of the British squadrons guarding the trade routes was commanded by Rear-Admiral Cradock, who had four cruisers, the *Good Hope, Glasgow, Monmouth* and *Otranto,* all inferior to the two best German boats, and was supposed also to have with him a slow battleship, the *Canopus.* It was so slow, in fact, that it would slow down his entire squadron, so he decided in favor of speed rather than safety, as many others have done before and since, and left the *Canopus* behind.

Right there was the fatal error. While cruising up the coast of Chile, off Coronel, on the afternoon of November 1, one of his ships sighted the German cruisers. He could have escaped, according to some British authorities, but with the very highest courage and gallantry, at least, he flung his light cruisers upon the formidable foe. But the German guns were so powerful and of so much greater range that he never even landed a shot on the enemy ships. Meantime his own boats were at once under a hail of steel. His flagship, the *Good Hope,* was soon ablaze, and blew up with a terrific detonation, and the *Monmouth* took fire and was sunk by the German guns. The other British ships escaped. Afterward the German Admiral, von Spee, remarked that if Cradock had had the battleship with him, "we should, I suppose, have got the worst of it."

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In fact, what might have happened was shown very clearly a few weeks later, on December 8, when von Spee's squadron stumbled upon a stronger British force at the Falkland Islands, and was wiped out, all but one ship, which wandered about the Pacific for three months and was then caught and destroyed. Sometimes the decision of a moment, if well made, brings a brilliant victory, but, if it happens to be of the other sort, may cause irretrievable ruin.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE "SHELL SCANDAL"

TURNING now to the British troops who were holding the line in France, we have a picture of dogged courage that has seldom been surpassed in the history of war, but we have, too, a scene that excites our pity at the same time. Imagine the men in swampy, water-logged trenches, often standing waist-high in bitterly cold water, assailed by the bombs, machine-guns and heavy artillery of the Germans, who were comfortably installed in dry trenches on higher ground. British machine guns were a very scarce article, while the Germans had thousands. Crude bombs were made from jam tins, and shells were such a rarity that at one time orders were issued restricting each gun to two shots a day. All this meant a heavy loss of life that need never have happened if the men in power had prepared for a war when its clouds had been darkening for years, and had shown the ordinary common sense of the citizen who makes preparations for an oncoming storm. The pathetic picture of brave men slaughtered in the watery trenches is not drawn by an enemy of England, but is given us by Sir William Robertson, who was Chief of Staff of the British forces in France at that time and was later made Chief of the General

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Staff, overseeing all the military operations of the Empire. His indignation is easily understood.

Nor was he the only one whose wrath was mounting during those torturing days. April, May and June of 1915 brought a series of furious battles where the lack of guns and munitions of all sorts caused a loss of British lives that horrified the nation. The British lack of high-explosive shells, commonly called "H. E.," kept the guns from destroying the German barbed-wire entanglements and trenches, and when the British advanced to the attack, "the German fortifications were barely pock-marked." In fact, the Germans rose in their trenches, mocked at the advancing British, "and then calmly mowed them down in thousands," while the Germans lost only 200 men. These are not the words of an enemy, but are quoted from a letter of Lloyd George to Prime Minister Asquith written only ten days after the battle of Festubert. An eye-witness of the battle was Colonel Repington, the famous war correspondent of the London *Times,* who telegraphed the *Times* "that the want of an unlimited supply of high explosive shells was a fatal bar to our success."

At this news British public opinion exploded. The Liberal government was forced to give important posts to the Conservatives, and even Lord Kitchener, who was revered with an awe approaching idolatry, was deprived of the control of munitions, and Lloyd George was made Minister of Munitions to try to save the situation. That was the famous "shell scandal." How serious it was may be seen from the fact

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that the British offensive, which was supposed to be a partnership affair with the French, petered out on May 25th, after 16 days, for lack of ammunition, while the French kept on alone seven weeks longer.

The Germans must have admired the courage of those British troops who leaped from their trenches, time after time, at the shrill of the whistle, without adequate artillery support or enough machine guns, and with crude hand-bombs made of jam-tins, to attack the splendidly prepared and equipped armies of Falkenhayn. But the Germans could hardly admire the wisdom of British generals who ordered such sacrifice. The British commanders explained that they were waging a "war of attrition"—that is, a war of wearing down and wasting away both armies, on the idea that when the last German was killed, several British and French would be left to claim victory. Two large and disastrous flaws have been found in this theory, however, by recent British writers who have been digging patiently and pitilessly into the war records of that time. The first is that the British and French losses of those days were twice as large as the German, so that the "attrition" was wasting away the Allied forces twice as fast as it was eating into the German ranks. The second flaw was that the prolific Fatherland was sending to the colors 1,000,000 men per year in new recruits, or new reënforcements more abundant than the losses, so that during the "attrition" the German armies were really growing larger instead of smaller. Thus from December, 1914, to June, 1915,

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the Germans on the western front lost over 500,000 men in killed, wounded, and prisoners, while the British and French facing them lost over 1,000,000. The Germans in their daily war bulletins remarked the big Allied losses, but their statements were dismissed with a wink by the Allied public, as "propaganda."

Of course it must be said that the British and French had to carry on the war and fight as best they could with whatever guns and shells they had. They could not ask the enemy to wait until they could equip themselves with the very latest patterns of homicidal devices. More urgent still, on the eastern front the great Russian giant was being beaten to his knees and was imploring the British and French to put every pressure on the western front to draw away the German armies that were hacking and hewing at him without mercy. The real defeat of Russia was inflicted by Hindenburg and Ludendorff at that time, and although Russian power seemed to flame up again in 1916, it was only a brilliant flare that died out, and Russia was done.

But in 1915 the Russian plight was so desperate that anything seemed justified to help, and the gallant men of France and Britain were thrown by thousands against the German lines in France in the hope that the attacks would recall German divisions from the eastern front and relax the inexorable pressure that was doing Russia to death. But it was all in vain. Not a jot of good was done for Russia, but a million brave British and French were lost in killed, wounded and prisoners in a brief seven months. For courage, it was

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splendid; but for wisdom, it was not. Later in the year Colonel Repington, war expert of the London *Times*, wrote in his diary: "American opinion is said to be deteriorating on account of all the stupid things we have done over here, and I am not surprised."

The tremendous energy of Lloyd George was now brought to bear to speed up the supply of guns and shells, and by September, 1915, a huge array was on hand. The next assault would not fail for lack of artillery and ammunition, anyway. Hope ran high. The German works were to be pounded into the earth by a tornado of shellfire such as the world had never seen, and the Allied forces were to rush through great gaps in the front and hurl the defeated and disorganized Germans back across the Rhine. Two spots about a hundred miles apart were selected as the best places to force the openings. The British were to break through at Loos, near the scene of their failure at Festubert in May, while the French were to force a breach in the Champagne region. Bursting through these openings, they would roll up the enemy lines with irresistible force, and bring the whole western front of the German military structure crashing down in ruin.

It was a wonderful plan, grand in purpose and conception, but it overlooked two vital points, as British historians like Buchan admit. First, the Allies did not realize the depth and strength of the German defenses. Every acre was a redoubt. A break through the first line only uncovered a second, a third, a fourth, and so

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on, until the delay of conquering line after line afforded the enemy time to bring up reserves and artillery enough to plug the gap. Next, the pause during the summer to accumulate guns and shells gave the Germans the same opportunity, so that September found the hostile armies about equal in that respect. "It is certain that the Allied staffs misread the problem," says Buchan, and even if they had grasped it, he adds, they "would not have been able to meet it."

At the time, the British and French attacks were viewed as important gains. Each army advanced several miles, bends were made in the enemy line that looked impressive on the war maps, but the Germans were still undefeated, the few square miles conquered were of no use to anyone, and the losses were terrific. Most exasperating of all, it was revealed later that a great victory was nearly won. Falkenhayn, the German commander, admits that he rushed reserves across from the Russian front "just in time to avert a serious defeat." A little better effort, then, might have done it. "It might have been." At one period in the battle a minor attack uncovered a weak spot in the German line and might have breached it, but had too small a force for it.

The staff work was faulty—that is, the staff officers, who coördinate the various efforts and keep everything running smoothly like clockwork, failed to do so, and there was disorder and confusion that always spell disaster. In short, there was "colossal blundering," says Buchan bluntly. The whole offensive was "prema-

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ture and mistaken." No reserves were available for the main attack during the whole of the first day, it seems, and no adequate reserves till the third day. The troops were magnificent, but their "superb drive and devotion" were "frittered away by a certain fumbling and confusion in the mind of headquarters."

And it was even worse than that. Mistakes in war are always paid for in human lives, and this time was no exception. In these futile attacks and in the weeks of desultory fighting that followed, the Germans lost 186,000 in killed, wounded and prisoners, while the Allies lost over 500,000. Such was the "attrition" that was to wear the Germans down! The figures are given from official sources by Winston Churchill, a member of the British Cabinet, and must be accepted as correct. At the time, of course, these terrific losses were kept secret, the Allied leaders pointed to the undoubted bends in the German line, and Lord Kitchener congratulated Sir John French on his "substantial" success. But as the year closed Sir John French was called home, Sir Douglas Haig was given command of the British Army in France, Joffre's wisdom began to be looked at with doubts in France, and even the towering figure of Kitchener seemed less wrapped in infallibility.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE DARDANELLES DISASTER

BUT the darkest and most tragical blunder of 1915, which ruined Russia, prolonged the war, and cost all the casualties that early peace would have saved, was being enacted in another quarter.

The thought of forcing the Dardanelles was certainly a brilliant idea. In fact, it seemed inspired. Losses, of course, were certain, but the prizes of success glittered enticingly. Beyond those famous straits lay Russia, her granaries bursting with wheat, while Britain and France were on short rations. The only route for that wheat was through the Dardanelles, now locked hard and fast by the Turks. To burst the locks and open the straits meant bread for the hungry Allied lands. To pierce that waterway, too, meant to open a route for dispatching guns, shells, rifles, and all the many needed things of war to the Czar's armies, which were being pounded into defeat by the splendidly equipped Germans. The helpless Russian troops were being swept by hurricanes of German shellfire without having the artillery or ammunition to reply. Their leader, the Grand Duke Nicholas, had sent a cry for help to Great Britain, and Lord Kitchener had pledged aid.

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If the Dardanelles could only be opened, it would bring aid indeed. And it would do even more. It would cut the Turkish Empire in two, give the Allies the world-famous city of Constantinople, and raise the Allied fame in all that region to the point where the wavering Balkan states, Greece, Bulgaria and Roumania, would join the Allied cause. With these reënforcements, Russia and Italy would almost certainly put Austria out of the war in a few months, and Germany could not carry on the conflict very long single-handed against all Europe. In short, the forcing of the Dardanelles would have won the war and saved millions of lives.

Instead of doing that, however, the ill-starred enterprise seemed to plunge from blunder to blunder, and from disaster to disaster, until the successful withdrawal of the troops that were left, after 100,000 had been lost, was hailed as the most brilliant feature of the entire campaign. These blunders are not recorded here for the pleasure of pointing out mistakes, or to pick flaws, but to drive home the point that incompetence and unwisdom in war are paid for every time in human lives, and it will happen next time just as surely and absolutely as last time if we carelessly let incompetents climb into the saddle.

The awful pity of the tragic series of errors at the Dardanelles was that high authorities revealed after the war that the enterprise was on the point of success half a dozen times only to be ruined by some fatal mistake. "It is no exaggeration to say that every mis-

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take we had made in our wars with France more than a hundred years before had been repeated," says Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, who was made Chief of the Imperial General Staff in the shake-up at the close of that disastrous year of 1915. There could be no better authority. And he adds that "the false direction given to our strategy," by the blunders of 1915, "imperiled the chances of ultimate success, and at the best was bound to hang like a millstone round our necks for the remainder of the war—as it did." An equal or higher authority was Winston Churchill, who was First Lord of the Admiralty and the chief backer of the Dardanelles enterprise. "The year 1915," he says, "was disastrous to the cause of the Allies and to the whole world," for "by the mistakes of this year the opportunity was lost of confining the conflagration within limits which though enormous were not uncontrolled. Thereafter the fire roared on till it burnt itself out."

We are fortunate in our study of this unlucky project in having witnesses who were in Constantinople, witnesses who were behind the Turkish guns at the Dardanelles, witnesses who were with the British fleet, and witnesses who were in the Government war councils in London. So we can see the scene in imagination from each end of the narrow strip of water for which the thousands of Turks, French and British fought and died under the blistering sun of that terrible summer. We have Churchill's brilliant and detailed analysis, we have the "Gallipoli Diary" of Sir Ian Hamilton, who

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commanded the British army at the Dardanelles, we have a dozen able British historians who give their side of the case; then on the other side we have Enver Pasha, the chief figure in the Turkish Government at Constantinople, the German General Liman von Sanders, who was in command at the Dardanelles, and other Turkish and German officers; and finally we have our own Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, our representative at Constantinople, who saw and heard everything with the impartiality of a neutral and who has given the whole picture vividly in two volumes of great interest and value, "Ambassador Morgenthau's Story" and "The Secrets of the Dardanelles."

Constantinople was in a panic long before the British and French had even started their expedition. The Turks and Germans alike, high and low, were positive that an Allied fleet could easily force the straits and bombard the city almost any fine morning. Some British and French ships had tossed a few shells at the outer ports on November 3, 1914, and a few weeks later, on December 13, a British submarine had dived under the minefields and sunk an old Turkish battleship —a daring and gallant feat. These events were enough to give Constantinople a bad attack of nerves. Everybody was feeling jumpy. On January 1, two weeks before the British Cabinet decided to send the expedition at all, the Turkish Government even had two trains ready to rush the Sultan and his suite and the diplomatic corps off to the interior of Asia Minor where they would be safe.

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The Austrian Ambassador had his railroad tickets. The German Ambassador asked if he could store his valuables at the American Embassy. People living on the waterfront expected a British shell through the front window any day or hour. Rumors were rife that the city would be burned rather than let it fall into enemy hands. Banks sent their gold away. Women and children were leaving daily. Wild excitement reigned. The American Ambassador talked with everyone in official position and with one or two exceptions they were unanimous in the prediction that the Allies would penetrate the straits in short order. True, it might cost a few ships, but that would be a small price to pay. Von der Goltz, who for years had been Turkey's German military instructor, had expressed the opinion, reported by Ambassador Morgenthau, that the Allies "could, by sacrificing ten ships, force the entrance, and do it very fast, and be up in the Marmora within ten hours from the time they forced it." A British Admiral is quoted as saying it could be done at the price of 12 ships.

Well, a strong force of eight battleships, five British and three French, attacked the outer forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles, on the morning of February 19, and it was soon discovered that the ships' guns outranged those of the forts so far that the ships could anchor off shore in perfect security and bombard the forts as calmly and leisurely as if at target practice. Naturally there could be only one result to such a one-sided affair, and in a few days we see the British

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and French marines landing on the deserted shore and blowing up what Turkish guns were left with gun-cotton. The entrance at least was won.

The main forts, however, lay some ten or fifteen miles further up, where there was a sharp kink in the waterway. Lying opposite each other, these two forts, Khilid Bahr and Chanak, commanded the channel completely with their guns, while the waters all around were strewn thickly with mines, any one of them powerful enough to blow up a battleship. An odd fact about these mines, humorous to one side and serious to the other, was that the Russians, anxious to help the British and French, set mines floating down the Bosphorus every night to sink the Turkish ships, but the Turkish mine sweepers carefully and efficiently picked them up every morning and took them down to the Dardanelles to use against the Allied fleet. Otherwise the Turks might have run out of mines.

The rest of the story of the naval attack is quickly told. The British and French pressed closer and closer to the forts until the fateful day of March 18, when no less than 18 Allied battleships advanced majestically up the narrow waterway to blast their way through to take panicky Constantinople and relieve suffering Russia. Unknown to the Admiral of the fleet, however, a little Turkish steamer had laid a line of mines in a bay that had been reported cleared of them. The mine sweepers did not look close enough. They found and removed two or three of the mines, and then mistakenly reported all clear. The airplanes circled

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overhead, and because the mines were too deep in the water to be seen, they reported there were none. A fatal error that cost Britain and France dear that day. That mistaken report, as Churchill remarks, "played a recognisable part in the history of the Great War."

Just before 2 o'clock the French battleship *Bouvet* hit one of the mines, and disappeared in two minutes with nearly all her crew. At 4 o'clock the British battleship *Inflexible* struck a mine, and three minutes later the *Irresistible* hit another. While going to aid the *Irresistible* the battleship *Ocean* became a fourth victim. The crews of the *Inflexible, Irresistible* and *Ocean* were saved. The French battleship *Gaulois,* too, was so badly battered by gunfire that she was beached. This loss of five battleships in one afternoon shook the nerves of the British and French commanders.

To the Turks and Germans defending the straits, however, it seemed only a normal loss, and they fully expected the fleet to renew the assault next morning. And not only that, but they expected the Allies to win. A Turkish artillery officer who was on the spot is quoted as saying: "I expected that the attack would be renewed, and, owing to the shortage of ammunition, I personally thought that the fleet would succeed in getting through the straits." Another Turkish officer said he "had no doubt personally that the British fleet could get through on March 18 or very soon after." A German officer in Berlin reported that "Berlin was quite certain that the British fleet could push through the Dardanelles after March 18, as the Turks had

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practically exhausted their ammunition. Some guns had none." Even Enver Pasha himself is reported as saying: "If the English had only had the courage to rush more ships through the Dardanelles, they could have got to Constantinople."

By an illuminating coincidence, Ambassador Morgenthau had obtained permission for an American correspondent of the Associated Press, Mr. George A. Schreiner, to visit the Dardanelles on the very 18th of March when the Allied ships were sunk. Mr. Schreiner discussed the outlook that same evening with General Mertens, chief German technical officer of the straits, who said: "We expect that the British will come back early tomorrow morning, and if they do, we may be able to hold out for a few hours," and he added significantly: "I should advise you to get up at 6 o'clock tomorrow morning and take to the Anatolian hills—that's what we are going to do." Mr. Schreiner discovered that one fort had only 17 armor piercing shells left, and the other only 10.

The British Cabinet, too, according to Churchill, expected fully that the fleet would renew the attack, but after a dispatch indicating that intention, the Admiral telegraphed a few days later that the army and navy officers at the Dardanelles did not think it wise to make any further attacks until military forces could be sent to coöperate and to hold the ground taken by the navy. So the fears of Berlin and Constantinople proved groundless; Mertens and his men did not take to the hills, and the 27 armor-piercing

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shells lay peacefully in their magazines until replenished by an ample supply of new ones. In the next six months 100,000 men were lost by death and wounds in a vain attempt to do what the fleet might have done with ease, if we are to credit these witnesses, on the morning of the 19th. Such are the narrow turns of circumstance on which the world's history hinges.

Everybody does not agree even today, however, that it was such a simple matter for the British and French fleets to blast their way up through the Dardanelles as it seemed. The debate has raged hot and heavy about it in England ever since the war. Suppose, for instance, that the fleet had got through to Constantinople, and then the Turks closed the straits behind them with fresh guns, torpedo tubes, mines, and what-not? The problem would be worse than before. In fact, that very thing happened in 1807, when a British admiral fought his way up to Constantinople, only to find himself bottled up there and cut off from provisions and supplies of all sorts, and he had to turn quickly and fight his way out again. In 1915 perhaps the fleet would not be so lucky. The French Admiral de Robeck, commanding the Allied fleet, urged this view, and it was finally decided not to renew the attack until troops were there to hold the straits when they were won, and make victory sure.

Many will inquire very naturally and sensibly, "Why was this not thought of before?" Why wait till the critical hour, and then draw back on the brink of victory and ask for something that should have been

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there in the first place? That is one of the darkest features of the whole Dardanelles story, for the British Cabinet were dilly-dallying over this question long enough to have sent the troops half a dozen times. In fact, the Cabinet decided on February 16 to send the 29th Division, and if they had stuck to it, the troops would have been there on the fateful 18th of March, and the great enterprise might have rung down the corridors of history as a resounding success instead of a pitiful reverse. But on February 20, four days later, the decision was reconsidered, and then the debate over it raged for weeks. Miscellaneous raw British troops in Egypt were available, but the seasoned 29th Division was needed to show the way and insure success. It was too risky a business for raw regiments alone. But fate was hurrying on. Golden opportunities do not wait for those who cannot decide what to do. It was not till March 10 that the 29th Division was at last ordered to go, and it was a week more before they actually got off. It was early April before they arrived.

Fate in the meantime offered one other chance of victory that might have saved the day, and incidentally might have saved the Russian armies and saved the Czar his crown and his life, but by the strange irony that seemed to rule the entire enterprise, this one last hope was promptly and proudly vetoed by the Czar himself, who thus blindly sealed his own doom. As Churchill tells us on the very highest authority, Venizelos on March 1 offered a Greek army corps of three

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divisions. This corps, with the Australasian army corps and other troops in Egypt, and with a British naval division and a French division that were to be had, would make a splendid force.

Everything seemed solved. Victory was in sight. At that moment, however, a blighting message came from St. Petersburg. It said flatly: "The Russian Government could not consent to Greece participating in operations in the Dardanelles, as it would be sure to lead to complications." It was the old jealousy between Russia and Greece over Constantinople. The plan collapsed. Nicholas had his way; and fate had its way with Nicholas.

In the course of time the 29th British division, which would have been a godsend to the Dardanelles enterprise on March 19th, came on the scene in early April. It was embarked in 22 transports, and if it had been ready to unload and go into action, perhaps something could have been done even then. But it was discovered that no such idea had ever entered the head of those who had loaded the ships. The guns were in one ship and the ammunition in another; everything had been loaded without the slightest arrangement or plan, and it was clear that all must be unloaded and resorted.

The nearest port where this could be done was Alexandria, in Egypt, so there the 22 transports went, while every Turkish fisherman and every little Turkish coasting vessel hurried to port and sent word to Constantinople. Not a line was printed about it in the press of all the Allied lands, where the censor kept it a

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complete secret. No one knew a word about it—except the Turks and the Germans and the Austrians, who at once began to scrape together all the available troops and guns to meet the new danger. At first, of course, the Turks and Germans did not know all the details of the expedition, but when everything was unloaded at Alexandria and spread out in full view of the admiring Moslem dock laborers, camel drivers and whatnot, it was not long before Constantinople and Berlin had a fairly good list.

Take it all in all, it was a full three weeks or more that the 29th Division spent sailing around the eastern Mediterranean, and that was time enough for the Turks to get ready to meet them. The German General Liman von Sanders was given chief command of the Turkish defenses at the Dardanelles on March 26, and after telling of the information that kept coming in, he says, "The English allowed me four whole weeks before their great landing. This time just sufficed to carry out the most necessary measures." In other words, less time might have meant British success. In March the Turks had less than 20,000 men on the peninsula, scattered about here and there in small detachments. In April they had 40,000, with 30,000 more in reserve, with ample guns and ammunition and defenses well organized to meet the Allied attack, and were ready to teach the Allied forces the truth of the old saying that delays are dangerous.

A very heartening thing about the war for anybody inclined to despair of our poor human race was the

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fact that the men in the ranks always showed up 100 per cent splendid. The blunders were not made by the men. When ordered to advance, they went forward till they were wiped out or told to stop. No such percentage of losses had been known in previous wars. Any flaws that existed were not in the ranks; and that is why it is all the more pity that the gallantry of the men was not matched by the brains of the leaders, and that such fine fellows should be sacrificed by thousands and tens of thousands needlessly.

No better example of this could be found than the landing of the British forces on the Gallipoli peninsula at the Dardanelles on Sunday, April 25, 1915. Amply warned and fully prepared for the British landing, the Turks swept the loaded boats and crowded beaches with a storm of rifle and machine gun fire until it seemed as if nothing could live in it. As we know now, the British leaders had no idea of the tremendous resistance the Turks could display—another miscalculation by those higher up. But the men never faltered. Where the slaughter was worst they had to be held back from charging into certain destruction until the guns of the fleet could silence the enemy. Their courage was true to the noblest traditions of their race. The plan was to take and hold five beaches, and they took and held five beaches; but where the British War Office reckoned the cost would be 5,000 casualties, it was 13,000. It was not the men who were found wanting.

The landing, however, was only a start. The beaches

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were under direct observation and fire from the rocky heights of the peninsula, and every attempt to take the heights was in vain. The bitterest fighting was almost continuous right through May, June and July, in heat so terrific that men returned to the habits of Eden. Even Colonels and Generals were content with mere trifles in the way of costume. Sickness took a heavy toll; the enemy guns took more. By June 1 the casualties were 38,000, by July 1, 42,000, and by August 1, nearly 50,000, in killed, wounded and missing. To replace these, 50,000 new reënforcements arrived in July, making good the losses. But this, as anyone can see, merely restored the numbers to the point where they were before. As one British historian truly remarks, had a quarter of those 50,000 been there three months earlier, the British would have been in Constantinople.

It was the old story—too late. That, in a word, was the tragedy of the whole enterprise. Major General Callwell, who was Director of Military Operations, a veteran of many wars, and the author of many books, remarks acidly in his work on "The Dardanelles" that the government "in a happy-go-lucky mood and confident that the enemy would crumble up before a show of bluff, had dispatched the expedition on a mission of which they had failed to realize the danger, and for which suitable preparations had not been made by them in advance." This may seem severe, but Churchill, who was in the British Cabinet at the time, declares that the army, "while victory was within their

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grasp, fell down for want of shells and reënforcements, both of which, on the scale they required them, could at any time have been supplied."

These are British criticisms, it must be remembered, made from motives of the highest patriotism to prevent future mistakes of such a tragic sort. If we turn to the "Gallipoli Diary" of General Sir Ian Hamilton, who commanded the army there, we find in the appendix a strong statement by General Simpson-Baikie, commander of the artillery, who says there were not only too few guns and not enough ammunition, but what guns they had were often obsolete or worn too badly to shoot straight. There was a lack of airplanes and trained airplane observers; wrong shells were sent for the wrong guns; new types of fuses were sent without fuse keys, and there was, "in short, total lack of organization at home to provide even the most indispensable artillery requisites for daily consumption." These serious faults, he adds, brought "their own penalties in the shape of heavy losses." And it was the brave men who had done their part who suffered the penalty.

As soon as it was clear that the attack on the tip of the Gallipoli peninsula was a failure, General Hamilton began to look about for some other point where he could thrust in a quick surprise assault and seize the heights behind the Turks before they had time to organize any adequate resistance. He decided upon Suvla Bay and "Anzac" Cove, named after the Australian-New Zealand troops, men of heroic proportions

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and courage, who fell by thousands in that fruitless and mismanaged venture.

The plan was excellent. It was intended to land large forces secretly, rush the heights before the Turks could arrive, and then command the roads and the Dardanelles from above, and force the Turks off the peninsula. The attack began on August 6, and in the Anzac area it made considerable progress, but the commander of the Suvla Bay force, for some reason that has puzzled all the British historians, decided, after his men had landed, that they were tired and needed a rest. Before him were the rocky heights he was ordered to take, thinly held by only three battalions of Turks against his 20,000 men. The nearest Turkish reënforcements were 30 miles away. Every hour of delay lessened his chances of success and increased the inevitable slaughter when the battle came.

The story seems almost incredible. Arriving on the evening of August 6, the commander spent the following day unloading his troops, had a good night's sleep, and on the 8th a general staff officer was thunderstruck to find the 20,000 men spread idly along the beach, bathing enjoyably in the surf, cooking, smoking and having an excellent rest. The commander was greatly pleased with the picture. "Well, Aspinwall," he said cheerfully, "the men have done splendidly and have been magnificent!" The amazed staff officer retorted: "But they haven't reached the hills, sir!" "No," replied the General, "but they are ashore!"

It was not until the morning of the 9th that these

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men attacked, after two full days of rest in plain sight of the watching Turks on the heights. Their brilliant opportunity had been frittered away. Strong Turkish reënforcements had been rushed up, and in place of the three weak Turkish battalions under a German major, the British were confronted with equal numbers led by the redoubtable Mustapha Kemal. In vain the repeated assaults, in vain the most dogged courage—again it was too late. The losses were terrific. One battalion, 700 strong on the 6th, had 53 left on the 8th. Of a force of 5,000 Turks who assailed the British lines only 500 returned. A British colonel with 16 officers and 250 men charged a dense piece of forest, and not one was seen again. These are but instances. The British losses are put at 45,000 and the Turkish at 40,000. And all for nothing.

One British detachment gained the heights and looked down on the Dardanelles and the roads full of Turkish troops below them. "The key of the whole peninsula was ours," says their commander, Colonel Allanson. But at that moment, by another frightful error, some British battery mistook them for Turks, swept them with high-explosive shell, drove them from the heights, killing 150 men, and the key position was lost. This mournful blunder was typical of the whole enterprise. A feint had been made by the British fleet of attacking another point, on the Gulf of Saros, and General Liman von Sanders, commanding the Turks, said later that if a landing had been made there after the Suvla failure he would have had no men to meet it.

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He was at the end of his rope. But the landing was not made. So "the adventure, when it had all but succeeded, shipwrecked," says John Buchan, British war historian.

The failure of the great Dardanelles enterprise resounded ominously throughout Europe. To Russia it was a clear warning that her Allies could send no help. To the wavering Balkan lands it was a message not to link their fortunes with the Allies, and Bulgaria, in fact, joined Germany. To Turkey it meant license to wage a war of extinction on the Armenians; to Austria, it meant opportunity to crush Serbia; to Germany, it was a promise of victory and world-domination.

In December, 1915, under the very muzzles of the Turkish guns, Suvla and Anzac were evacuated, and in January, 1916, Helles was evacuated, with hardly the loss of a man, in a brilliant achievement that was, in the words of the Prime Minister, "without parallel in military or naval history." If half the skill had been shown in attacking the Dardanelles that was displayed in getting away, the latter feat would have been unnecessary.

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CHAPTER XV

VERDUN AND THE SOMME

No such mournful failure as the Dardanelles reverse marked the next year, 1916; and, in fact, it was hailed in all the Allied lands as a year of great success, with victory just around the corner. At the end of the year the German army was supposed to be punished so badly that it was nearly ready to give up, and plans were actually laid to deal it the knock-out blow in 1917. Even histories written after the war persisted in the belief that the German losses at Verdun and the Somme in 1916 had run far beyond those of the French and British, and had brought the German forces near to the end of their rope. Later researches into German, French and British records and reports, however, bring to light the fact that it was not the Germans, but the Allies, who were suffering the biggest losses in these huge conflicts. As late as 1921 the writer of these lines visited Verdun and was entertained at luncheon by the grizzled Commandant of the fortress, in one of the subterranean chambers hewn out of the rock beneath the citadel. The Commandant, who was in Verdun during the entire siege, told me in complete sincerity that the Germans lost 400,000 and the French 300,000. Official figures given by Churchill, as men-

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tioned in a previous chapter, now place the German loss at 278,000, and the French at 460,000, or worse than a reversal of the popular idea of it.

It is hardly too much to say that the whole world watched with agony while the terrible mill of Verdun ground its human grist from February to June, 1916, and the flower of French and German youth were fed into it. No one can go over this battlefield without a throb of pity for the brave men whose bones are mingled so thickly in the soil that it is impossible to tell friend from foe or, indeed, one from another. The bones are being gathered miscellaneously into large receptacles, and German and French fathers and mothers mingle as they deposit flowers and photographs of their sons, not even knowing if their remains are there or are still out somewhere in the hills and valleys along the Meuse. It may have been a German mistake to besiege Verdun, for the Germans were beaten off and the Crown Prince, who was supposedly in command, suffered a bad blow to his prestige, but it was certainly no mistake for the French to defend it, no matter what their losses were. It was no mistake to defend it, but mistakes may have been made in defending it which added to the losses and made them larger than need be.

For instance, Verdun stood in a large salient that projected into the German line, and was so tempting in every way that it would be easy to suppose that the Germans would attack it, yet the French neglected its defenses and let them run down so badly that a

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member of the French Parliament, who was also a colonel on duty at Verdun, came to Paris and told his fellow deputies that things were in a dangerous state there. That was nearly three months before the German assault, plenty long enough to put all the defenses shipshape, ready for the worst the Germans could do. There followed a great deal of correspondence, conversation and to-do generally, but very little actual preparation to meet the Germans.

A month before the attack, the French Intelligence Bureau warned the army chiefs that it was coming, yet when the storm burst, the defenses were still inadequate. The trenches lacked continuity and efficient organization. The forts, dismantled and disarmed as out of date, were now hurriedly armed again. Delay was paid for at frightful cost, and, in short, as Churchill puts it, "the neglect of the field and permanent defenses of a fortress which it was decided to defend to the death now bequeathed a cruel legacy to the French troops." Once the battle began, the heroism of the French was beyond all praise, and their gallant defense will go down in history with the greatest combats the world has known, but if there had been better preparation, it may be that many of the heroes whose bones lie unrecognized on Verdun's hillsides would be alive today, helping their country win the victories of peace.

The big error of the Germans at Verdun lay in the belief that they could blast the French out of their trenches with artillery fire, just as they had done with the Russians. The difference was that the French, un-

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like the Russians, had artillery enough to shoot back, so the blasting process went on in a titanic and tragic game of mutual extermination until the German forces were called away to meet another experiment of the same kind on the river Somme, a little over 100 miles to the west.

It was on July 1, 1916, that the great British assault was launched against the German lines north of the Somme. In all the Allied lands the highest hopes were pinned on its success. The British armies were at a pinnacle of perfection never attained before, and never reached again. Guns and shells were there in prodigal profusion, thanks to the genius and industry of the redoubtable David Lloyd George, who was British Minister of Munitions, then Secretary of State for War, and then Prime Minister. By a curious exchange of rôles, the British were now to try out the same kind of attack the Germans had used at Verdun, and were to meet the same kind of failure. In this way the year 1916 was divided into two equal parts; in the first part the Germans learned a costly lesson at Verdun, and in the second part the British, in spite of that clear and plain example, had to learn the same tragic lesson all over again. It is probably true, as British historians remark, that with such a magnificent army to hand, with such vast supplies of guns and shells available, and with France calling for help to relieve the German pressure at Verdun, it was inevitable that the British should strike with all their might at the German front. No human power could have prevented it. It was one

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of those things that seem decreed by some inscrutable and inexorable fate. If the British were ever to win, this seemed to be the hour. So sure were the British leaders, in fact, that they would pierce the German lines, that bodies of cavalry were held ready to gallop through the openings and saber the German gunners far in the rear, as the famous six hundred tried to do in the "Charge of the Light Brigade" at Balaklava in the Crimean War. Unfortunately the result was much the same in both attacks.

The British assault of July 1, 1916, was terrific; the losses were also terrific. A German soldier, who viewed the British advance, said: "Whole sections seemed to fall, and the rear formations, moving in closer order, quickly scattered. The advance rapidly crumpled under the hail of shells and bullets. . . . The extended lines, though badly shaken and with many gaps, now came on all the faster. . . . Again and again the extended lines of British infantry broke against the German defense like waves against a cliff, only to be beaten back. It was an amazing spectacle of unexampled gallantry, courage, and bulldog determination on both sides." This, of course, was only a view of what took place at one point, but it describes accurately what happened all along the northern half of the British front. On the southern half the German line was bent back one or two miles on a front of seven miles, but the expected gap never opened. Between 50,000 and 60,000 British soldiers were killed, wounded, or taken prisoners before nightfall, nearly

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half of the total number who went over the top that day.

It was the most disastrous day the British Army had ever known. One British division lost 218 out of 300 officers, and 5,274 out of 8,500 men, in less than three hours, while the German regiment which repulsed its attack lost only 8 officers and 273 men. Of course the censorship kept these losses secret, but the British command realized the situation. Sir Douglas Haig, the British Commander in Chief, said in his dispatches that "In view of the general situation at the end of the first day's operations, I decided that the best course was . . . to limit the offensive on our left for the present to a slow and methodical advance."

We are now privileged to turn from the British to the German headquarters and see what the German Commander in Chief thought of it. Says Falkenhayn in his book: "If by the evening of the second day of the battle it was quite certain that the break-through planned by the English and French would not succeed, after the first week G. H. Q. knew with equal certainty that the enemy would also fail to reach his objective in the nibbling tactics to which he had been compelled to resort after the miscarriage of the break-through." The German Commander in Chief knew the effort to pierce his line would fail; we know now that it did fail; but the British leaders did not seem to sense it, and kept up their costly assaults from midsummer until far into November. Gains of a mile here and a mile there from time to time permitted the military chiefs

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to tinge the bulletins with rosy hues, and give the home public a feeling of victory, but it was a false hope that was getting them nowhere.

The failure to realize the facts of the situation are laid by Hindenburg to a lack of imagination. He wrote after the war: "If our western adversaries failed to obtain any decisive results in the battles of 1915 to 1917, it must be ascribed to a certain unimaginativeness in their generalship." A little imagination, for example, might have led the British commanders to suppose that mountainous and elaborate preparations on a certain sector for a mighty assault would cause the Germans to make equally complete preparations for an impregnable defense. That, as a matter of fact, is exactly what occurred, so that when the shock of assault came, it was much like the classic supposition of an irresistible force meeting an immovable body.

German observers in airplanes and sausage balloons had seen the huge ammunition dumps grow more vast. "Many miles of new railways—both standard and narrow gauge—and trench tramways were laid," says Sir Douglas Haig. New roads were built, "long causeways were built over marshy valleys," scores of miles of trenches were dug. The German telescopes and airplane cameras would be blind indeed not to see such plain evidences of a coming drive. German preparations were made to match. The German lines were equipped with bomb-proof caves, dug-outs and cellars where the men took refuge during the preliminary bombardment, and then rushed out as the barrage

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lifted and mowed down the advancing British with hundreds of machine guns as reapers mow the grain. As the British artillery cut lanes in the German wire, the Germans planted guns to sweep them with shells and bullets. Imagination, as Hindenburg says, might have foreseen these things without sacrificing thousands and ten of thousands of the flower of British youth to find them out.

No one could blame the British chiefs for using their splendid army to strike a blow when they did. It would be even more culpable not to strike. It may be, too, that the hope of victory lured them on justifiably as they saw the German line slowly bending and yielding here and there before their assaults. But to keep it up for four and a half months, after it must have been clear to everyone that a break-through was impossible, somehow does not look to the ordinary observer like the highest type of generalship. The last six weeks of the battle were fought in a sea of mud, with men, horses and guns slipping and sliding about in the slime, the trenches sometimes three feet deep with water, and the cold paralyzing every movement. Yet the commanders urged the men on and on until human effort could do no more, and the conflict died down in November, choked in mud and misery. The British, in this period, suffered 410,000 losses in killed, wounded and prisoners, and inflicted 180,000 losses on the Germans, according to the figures of Colonel Boraston, a member of General Haig's staff, whose estimate may therefore be considered of the highest

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authority, while the British public were being assured that the combat was a great victory.

British historians treat the Battle of the Somme as if it were purely a British affair, and that has come to be the popular view of it. But such was not at all the fact. Half the front was held by the French, who concealed their intentions from the Germans so well that in the first ten days of the battle they penetrated twice as far into the German lines as the British. Throughout the battle, despite the terrific milling their army had suffered at Verdun, they held as long a front as the British, and gained as much ground as the British, and in the matter of losses they "gave as good as they got" and came off with an even score, both inflicting and receiving losses of about 340,000 in killed, wounded and prisoners. While the German line was pushed back about six miles, the British forces had suffered frightfully. "The Battlefields of the Somme were the graveyards of Kitchener's army," says Churchill. And one cannot help wondering, if the leaders had had the imagination that Hindenburg said they lacked, whether the result might not have been different.

The British and French Governments considered the great Somme battle only a moderate success, according to John Buchan, the British war historian, but we know from German authorities that the Teuton strength was badly sapped by the terrific combats at Verdun and on the Somme, and the morale of the German people was affected. Peace talk was rife in Germany,

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and in November, 1916, the German Government proposed peace negotiations. This offer was treated at the time in the press of the Allied lands as a ruse, a trick to let Germany win by bargaining what she could not win by the sword; but we know now that, instead, it was a move forced on the German Government by its own people, sick and weary of war, fed up with a succession of victories in Serbia, victories in Roumania, victories in Russia, victories here and victories there, but no end to the war, nothing but hunger, privations, deaths, wounds, year after year, and no end in sight. The Allies declined the German peace offer, and with good reason, for it is certain that no agreement on terms could have been reached at that time, and the war would have gone on just the same.

All the armies, however, on both sides, had been terribly depleted by the awful battles of 1916, and it is generally agreed that they never again during the war reached the high mark of efficiency that they showed at the beginning of that tragic year. The German army was in such a bad way, in fact, that Ludendorff frankly declared in his book, "My War Memories," that "if the war lasted, our defeat seemed inevitable."

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CHAPTER XVI

THE DEFEATS OF 1917

In the Somme battle the British and French had pushed the German line into a bad position. Hindenburg and Ludendorff saw clearly that the British would take advantage of this fact early in the spring of 1917 and would start another drive that might bring disaster, and as a matter of fact that was precisely the British plan. Indeed, it is very striking how often the Germans seemed to know the Allied plans, and how seldom the Allies seemed to know the German plans. To evade the British attack and make it futile, the Germans secretly built the famous Hindenburg line, miles back of the line they then held, and vastly stronger, and then just before the British were to begin their great attack, the Germans quietly slipped back to the new trenches, leaving a mere screen of troops on the old line to deceive the Allies, which they did with great success.

It is hardly necessary to say that if the British had attacked the Germans in the middle of their withdrawal, they would have had them at a great disadvantage, but the golden moment was lost. All the British airplanes along the front failed to detect this great shift. Captain Thomas G. Frothingham, of the

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U. S. Navy, in his "Guide to the Military History of the War," remarks that this is "another proof that aircraft have not put an end to the suprises in war," and he says that "it is hard to understand how this great retreat was so successfully accomplished by the Germans, and it is needless to point out that the attacks in force by the Allies would have been very dangerous to the Germans, if made at a critical stage of the withdrawal."

But having missed the opportunity to strike the Germans when they were half way between their two lines and not in full strength in either one, the Allied commanders then decided to hurl their armies at the new Hindenburg fortifications. The British were to attack at Arras, and the French along the river Aisne, west of Rheims. The plan was that the British assault at Arras on April 9 would draw the German reserves to that region, and then, while the Germans were busy there, the French would suddenly smash through their front on the Aisne and send them in a demoralized rout back to the frontier and out of France. One great flaw in the plan, however, was that the Germans knew all about it, as we shall see later.

On the appointed day, which happened to be the morning after Easter, 1917, the British guns broke into the heaviest cannonade the world had ever seen. The elaborate front line German trenches soon ceased to exist. Nothing was left but an insane chaos of shell craters and plowed earth. The barrage lifted and the British swarmed forward. In 40 minutes the first line

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was theirs. By 9:30 A. M. they had the whole of the German second position, save one short stretch. On they surged, making enormous captures of enemy guns, and by evening they had burst through the enemy third line in two places, in one of them on a front of two and a half miles. This was the last German prepared position short of a "switch-line" that was still in the making.

Anxiety reigned at German Headquarters. Would the British follow up their advantage and push through the gap? Haig decided it would be better to wait and widen the gap further next day, and we have it on good authority that when Hindenburg realized that Haig was not thrusting his forces through the opening, he triumphantly seized the hand of Ludendorff, for reserves were on the way and would arrive next morning. The situation was saved for Germany—and lost for Britain. The battle raged on for two weeks, but it was really over. It failed right at that point. Four or five miles of ground was gained, but it was entirely useless and was all lost the next year. The British losses, again, were far higher than the German, and the "war of attrition" ate much deeper into the British ranks than into those of the enemy.

Meantime the French were busy preparing their end of the plan. The supposition was that the Germans were stripping their whole front of reserves to meet the great British assault at Arras, and while they were thus weakened, the French would smash through on the Aisne, rout the Germans, and win the war.

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Unfortunately for this scheme, brilliant as it may have been, the Germans learned practically every detail of it. On March 3, six weeks before the French attack was to be launched, a German trench raid captured a vital document outlining a new principle of the offensive that the French had adopted. All through March the Germans kept getting more information, and, as the Crown Prince relates, "On April 6 a clever attack brought into our possession an order of attack of the Fifth French Army. In it the French attacking units were mentioned by name. Fresh information upon the expected French method of attack was given. The last veil concealing the intention of the French offensive was torn aside."

It need hardly be said that these revelations doomed the French attack to sanguinary disaster before it started. But entirely aside from this phase of it, the highest French and British military leaders viewed the scheme with deep doubt and distrust, and believed it was doomed to defeat. All that kept it going was the optimism and insistence of General Nivelle, who had been made commander of the French armies after his brilliant defeat of the Germans at the later battle of Verdun. He made the most rosy promises of overwhelming victory. Painlevé, the French Minister of War, believed there was no chance of a break-through, and urged Nivelle to reconsider. Pétain was skeptical; Michelet, chosen to command the main offensive, wrote to ask Nivelle if he thought it really wise to go on with the scheme. Many other military leaders

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were chilled with doubt. But Nivelle was a fountain of optimism. His only fear, he told Painlevé, was that the Germans would get away too quickly. Their front would be broken with almost no French loss whatever. It would be hard to hold the French troops back. They would soon be racing through the towns and cities far back of the German line. The French Ministry, doubtful, distrustful, distressed, let themselves be submerged by this deluge of promises, and gave way in spite of their better judgment. The die was cast.

The story of these gigantic Allied failures to break the German front is not pleasant to read or pleasant to write, but they are worthy of study and remembrance to prevent similar costly tragedies in some future, perhaps far-off, crisis, when incompetent hands may have the power to send the flower of our youth to a useless even if gallant fate. This was the last mistake of that kind, at least, on the French front. In vain the brave French poilus struggled up the Aisne heights in the face of murderous and withering fire from an enemy who knew every detail of their plan of attack. In vain every effort, every sacrifice. The rosy assurances of Nivelle faded and turned to ashes. In ten days of fighting, from April 16 to 25, the French had gained some of the heights on the north bank of the Aisne, but not enough to complete any strategical purpose. Some ground was gained, but the main aim of the attack had failed. Nivelle was asked to resign and was replaced by Pétain.

But a great assault of this kind cannot be ended like

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an afternoon tea. Once started, it had to go on until some kind of stable front could be established. So the battle continued, until the soldiers themselves saw that they were being fed into the fiery furnace without any real gain to France and in May a revolt began in the ranks. Regiments, brigades and even an entire division declared they were perfectly ready to die for France, but refused absolutely to go on fighting uselessly in the futile attacks on the Aisne. The mutiny grew until it looked like the first steps in a revolution, and some of the troops even started to march on Paris, but by promptly stopping the Aisne offensive and granting reasonable requests of the soldiers, Pétain restored order and loyalty. Not till the war was over did either the Germans or the British ever learn a word of the mutiny. But what a commentary on "strategy" it is when the common soldiers are wiser than their general, and know enough to stop an attack that is nothing but military suicide!

The little slices of territory gained by the Allies seemed to have a strangely bewitching effect on the minds of the generals, making them think that the next attack, or the next, or the next, would be the magic one to break the German line. They were like players at Monte Carlo, risking more and more on the hope that the next throw would win. And they were not risking coin, but lives. Churchill, a member of the British Cabinet, flatly brands "without exception all the great Ally offensives of 1915, 1916, and 1917 as needless and wrongly conceived operations of in-

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finite cost." The frightful losses were kept secret and the slight gains of territory were played up in the bulletins as signs of victory. It is true that the demand for these offensives could hardly be denied. The year 1917 especially was a time of anxiety that was almost agony. The Russian front was dissolving under the dark forces of the revolution; submarine sinkings threatened to starve Great Britain, cripple the munition supply, and keep the American Army from landing in France. Italy was calling for help. Everything demanded haste. Yet we see clearly now that the Allied drives did not save the Russian front, did not save Italy from the disaster of Caporetto, and did nothing to counteract or offset the u-boats. True, it is easy to see these things afterward, but it is the duty of leaders entrusted with planning and waging a war to see things in advance, and to be wise before the event.

There are no excusable errors in war; all blunders are inexcusable. And it was especially unpardonable, it would seem to the ordinary onlooker, to repeat in 1917 the same useless tactics that had decimated the Allied ranks in the previous years. In fact, it almost seems like an empty repetition to tell over again the story of the brave advances in the face of the enemy fire, the sanguinary combats where the British losses far outran the German, and the final end of the battle with nothing worth while gained to show for all the heroism that brought mourning into thousands of homes. The British offensive against Passchendaele in the fall of 1917 has been called "a forlorn expenditure

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of valor and life without equal in futility." Ground was gained, but the British paid nearly two lives to one for it, and could do nothing profitable with it after they got it. In the last half of 1917, including the British drives at Passchendaele and Cambrai, the British inflicted 237,000 losses on the Germans, in killed, wounded, missing and prisoners, while the Germans inflicted 394,000 losses of the same sort on the British, a ratio of more than three to two.

A new picture, at least, meets the eye at Cambrai, however. New tactics were used on both sides that were to play great parts upon the scene in the next year. Here they were rehearsed, were found successful in a limited way, and were determined upon for larger rôles in 1918. The first of these was the tank, which the British had tried out in very small numbers in previous drives. The tank's earliest enemy was British conservatism, which nearly kept it from ever appearing on the battlefield at all. Tanks are likely to stick in the mud, it was objected, and as most battlefields are muddy, therefore the tanks are of no use. This piece of logic, however, could not prevent a few being built in 1915 as a trial, and they had behaved so well that when the drive on Cambrai was staged, in November, 1917, no less than 500 were on hand to lead the attack, waddle through the Germans' barbed wire, rake their trenches, rout their gunners, and play the mischief generally right through the enemy works from front to rear. And they did it, too.

The secret of the tanks had been given away a year

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before to the enemy when a number of them had been used in the battle of the Somme, and the tank's friends feared that a fatal blunder had been made in allowing the Germans to see them before enough were ready to win a real victory. This gave the Germans time to build a fleet of tanks to meet the British monsters, but luckily for the British, Ludendorff viewed the tanks' performance in 1916 with lofty Prussian contempt and decided that they were useless. Thus fate for once favored the Allies and one blunder counterbalanced another.

The victory of the tanks at Cambrai was stunning. The historian of the Tank Corps, Colonel Fuller, says very truly, "The attack was a stupendous success. As the tanks moved forward, with the infantry following close behind, the enemy completely lost his balance, and those who did not fly panic-stricken from the field surrendered with little or no resistance. By 4 P. M. on November 20 one of the most astonishing battles in all history had been won." Ten thousand German prisoners and 200 guns were captured in one day, with small British loss, and the German front was penetrated three miles deep on a front of six miles. It was in this battle that a German artillery officer, only survivor of a gun crew, stood in the open with his field-piece and wrecked ten tanks single handed before he was put out of action. It was the tank's day and the tank's vindication. Now, said its friends, if conservatism had not stood in its way earlier in the war, the army would have had 5,000 instead of 500, and would

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have had them a year earlier, and would have defeated the Germans then and there. The delay and opposition were errors of the worst sort, as these British critics see it, and it would be hard to prove that they are not right.

Well, the tanks opened the way to a great British victory at Cambrai and the dogged troops in the first two days drove a great wedge into the German front. Sir Douglas Haig, the British commander, said in his dispatches that he thought "it was reasonable to hope that masses of cavalry would find it possible to pass through, . . . disorganize the enemy's system of command and intercommunication" in a large area, and permit his troops to get behind the Hindenburg Line, attack the enemy in the rear, and capture his positions and "probably most of his garrisons" on a long stretch of the front.

The command, however, was never given. Instead, the troops were ordered to fortify and hold the line they had won, bulging far into the German front. The explanation given for this change of plan, this abandonment of the idea of breaking through the enemy line, was that the British troops were worn out by the previous battle at Passchendaele, the losses had not been adequately replaced, and the new drafts had not been fully trained. Then, too, the final German line had not been fully breached, and, as two days of fighting had elapsed, strong enemy reserves were arriving. Hence it seemed best to try to hold what had been won. The new front, however, was like a cape or

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promontory extending far into a sea of German bayonets, and beset by the gray-green waves on three sides —a perilous situation. "I feel confident," said Sir Douglas Haig in his dispatches, however, "that the defense of this sector could be considered safe."

So safe did he think it, in fact, that he had British and American engineers building supply railways in the midst of the salient, and it was there that the American engineers a little later snatched up rifles to help repel a German rush. Attacks were to be expected anywhere and everywhere, of course, and no one in the war was more practiced than the British commander in delivering a feint attack at one point and then the real attack at another. Yet this time he was to be caught napping by this ancient ruse. The Germans made a strong drive at the northern side of the salient, and then when the British attention was drawn to that point, they made their main assault on the southern side. "There is a little doubt," Haig confessed frankly, "that although an attack was expected generally, yet in these areas of the battle at the moment of delivery the assault effected a local surprise." A large part of the British gain was wiped out swiftly by this surprise stroke and 10,000 British prisoners and 200 guns were taken.

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CHAPTER XVII

"WITH OUR BACKS TO THE WALL"

It was bad enough for the British commander to be caught asleep like this, but that was not the worst of it. The German drive that broke through the salient was a full-dress rehearsal of the von Hutier plan of attack by "infiltration" which was to overwhelm the British front on March 21 next, but the British commanders seem to have suspected nothing. The von Hutier plan had been tried out at Riga, unsuspected by anyone, then at Caporetto, with everybody equally in the dark, and now was rehearsed at Cambrai. As Ludendorff says, the action "had given valuable hints for an offensive battle in the West, if we wished to undertake one in 1918." It gave hints to Ludendorff, but none to Haig. "The lesson was missed," remarks an English historian, "but four months later the armies of France and Britain were to read it in letters of fire."

That flaming date of March 21, 1918, will be long remembered in British history. The day before was as quiet as a Sunday in the country; the next morning was like pandemonium in Hades. On March 20 the formidable British line, manned and gunned miles deep, seemed impregnable; on the 21st the Germans brushed it aside like straw. In 1917 the British and

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French took months to force a slight bend in the German line; in 1918 the Germans pushed the British front back 35 miles in one week. The news of it, reverberating through the world, seemed incredible. In every Allied land it set hearts beating in apprehension, while in Germany it set the bells ringing in jubilation. The British Fifth Army, which held a front of some 40 miles, had eleven divisions in line and five in reserve on that fateful morning, and inside of three or four days it was battered and crushed into scattered fragments, mere groups of men holding out here and there amid overwhelming masses of the enemy. Many and many of these groups absolutely disappeared in the wild tornado of the battle, with no one left even to tell the story of their heroic end. After a week of disorganized retreat, it was another week before the British and French could bring up enough reserves to stop the German advance and establish a new front. The two weeks had been a nightmare to both sides. Day and night the combat had raged, with sleep impossible, until both Germans and British were battling in an agony of weariness; the attacks were made slowly with dragging feet, and both sides took prisoners who were wandering about too far gone with fatigue to know where they were or what they were doing.

This was far and away the biggest defeat the British had suffered in the war, and now that time enough has gone by to let us perceive things more clearly, we can see that possibly the defeat need never have hap-

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pened at all. In the first place, the battle had been raging only six days when the British and French premiers and war chiefs had a hurried meeting and made Foch Commander in Chief of the armies on the western front. This was a tacit confession that it should have been done before, and it was not many weeks before Foch began turning defeat into victory. The great German wedge was thrust in at the junction of the French and British fronts, the very point where lack of unity would cause weakness, and if the unity of command had only come a year earlier, as all the experts now say it should, might not the terrible Allied reverses of the Spring of 1918 have been avoided?

No one can answer this question, of course, but we do know that these great German drives broke through on sectors where the Allied lines were very, very thin. Where were the thousands and hundreds of thousands of gallant French and British who had been sacrificed in futile assaults on the German guns in 1915, 1916, and 1917? The statistical tables of losses show that during those years the British on the western front lost 1,750,000 men in killed, wounded, missing and prisoners, while they inflicted only 850,000 similar losses on the Germans. It would seem to the ordinary man that something was wrong with the British conduct of the war to show such one-sided results. The French, too, come out little if any better, for during the same period they lost over 3,000,000 men in killed, wounded, missing and prisoners, while inflicting only 1,600,000 similar losses on the enemy. Losses are certainly inevitable

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in war, but not losses of two to one, year after year, and if the regiments and divisions of men who might have been saved by a wiser generalship had been manning the Allied lines on that critical morning in March, 1918, there might have been a different story.

No less than 64 picked German divisions were launched against 32 British divisions on that misty dawn of March 21, 1918. It is true that the attack was expected; it was no surprise; but in the fog small parties of Germans filtered unseen in among the British forward positions, which suddenly found themselves surrounded by machine guns and light trench artillery. They had no time or chance to notify the main battle line in their rear, which was being plastered with German shells, so that a little later, without warning, the battle line was inundated with a vastly superior German force. Openings were forced, through which the enemy poured in a flood, and before nightfall disaster reigned. Within ten days five more British divisions had been thrown into the battle—but Ludendorff had thrust in nine more. By April 9 the British had used 49 divisions, but the Germans had brought up 80. And while those odds seem bad enough, it was much worse on two ten-mile sectors, where the disparity was three and four to one. These big odds may have been the thing that turned the scale. Some historians have given the credit to the new German scheme of "infiltration," but the Germans tried those same tactics for a week on a 20-mile front a little further north and made a total failure of it, although they threw twenty German

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divisions against eight British. Not a crack or a crevice could they make in the British front. Odds of twenty to eight were evidently not enough at that place.

So on April 9 another weak spot was picked in the British line. At Neuve Chapelle a Portuguese division was holding nearly five miles of front, and against this one division Ludendorff hurled seven picked German divisions. It need hardly be said that the Portuguese division was practically wiped out of existence and a gap five miles wide was opened in the British battle line, and was soon widened to seven miles. Through it the Germans poured like a gray deluge. Day by day the breach widened and deepened. It seemed as if the enemy might even push through to the Channel ports and threaten England with invasion, and on April 12, Sir Douglas Haig published his famous "back-to-the-wall" appeal to the army. "There must be no retirement," he said. "With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end." His appeal met a willing response, and after weeks of the most titanic combat, the German rush was stopped after the British line had been pushed back from five to seventeen miles on a front of fifty miles.

The fault here, as in the failure of the Fifth Army in March, was clearly the lack of men, as British observers agree. The front was too thinly manned. Of course, if the men were not to be had, then it could not be helped. But right here we come upon the surprising fact that within a month of the German attack

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on March 21, over 350,000 troops were sent from England to France, or more than enough to have made Haig able to match Ludendorff in numbers, man for man and gun for gun. If Haig had had this one-third of a million men in March, it is easy to believe he could have stopped the Germans in their tracks, and the great disasters of March and April need never have been.

Such was the short-sightedness of the home government in London that this great army was held there to cope with a possible invasion that never materialized, and never even came near it, and so the war was nearly lost in France through fear of something that could be much better stopped there than it could after it had crossed the Channel. As it was, over 300,000 British were killed, wounded, missing or taken prisoner in 5 weeks, or nearly double the losses of the disastrous Dardanelles campaign of 34 weeks, so that the new reënforcements merely made good the losses. If they had been sent a few weeks before, most of the losses might have been avoided, and Britain would have saved thousands of her sons. It was one more illustration of Lloyd George's famous analysis of Britain's besetting error—"too late!"

It must unfortunately be recorded that in this crisis a rather bitter spirit had grown up between the French and British forces—just at the time when unity and harmony were urgently needed. The French scarcely hid their contempt for the British who had let the Germans drive them back time after time without re-

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gaining a mile of the lost territory. The British, on their side, had appealed again and again to the French for aid in their days of distress and desperation, and the French response had been very tardy and scanty. This had caused considerable bitterness. The French had some reason for clinging closely to their reserves, however, for they felt that the time was nearing rapidly when one of Ludendorff's terrific hammer-blows would descend on their own line, and they wished to be prepared for it.

By the irony of fate, however, when the blow did come, it found them totally unprepared, and nearly smashed its way through to Paris. It was in the German plans that if Ludendorff could take Paris, it would start a French revolution in favor of peace and so bring a German victory. It is quite possible that the German calculations were a bit awry, as they often proved to be, and that no such thing would have happened, but at any rate it is surprising that the French were caught napping so disastrously. News about the enemy's plans was often got by raids on his trenches, fetching away prisoners who gave information, but we are told that in this case, for some strange reason, no effective raids of any importance were carried out, right at a time, too, when the French command knew that a terrific thrust was practically certain.

So we see on the heights of the Aisne, in the pleasant days of May, 1918, four French divisions resting securely in their trenches, in what Foch had called a "quiet" sector, confident that the heights made their

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position too strong to attack. With them were three British divisions, racked and torn in the northern battles, and sent to this quiet spot to rest and recuperate. All was serene. True, the British command, who had been doing a little trench-raiding, sent a formal warning to the French command on the Aisne that an attack was to be made there, but the French calmly replied that they saw no indications of it. At last, however, on May 26, the French took two prisoners, and learned the awful truth. A big German drive was to strike them the very next morning. The French General Headquarters was at once notified, but there was no time to prepare. Imagine the frightful state of mind of the military chiefs who knew a terrific catastrophe was as certain as sunrise, and were helpless to avert it. Again the fateful words "too late" hung over the Allied lines.

Promptly at dawn next morning eighteen German divisions fell upon the seven French and British divisions, overwhelmed them, and by evening had advanced twelve miles to the Vesle river. On they went, day after day, until they stood again on the Marne, whose waters they had not seen for four years. At Chateau Thierry they were pushing along the road toward Paris. Such was the bitter result of unpreparedness in the face of an alert and vigorous foe.

But there seemed to be something in the Marne waters fatal to German ambitions. For some mystic reason the German armies who looked upon this stream in 1914, and again in 1918, appeared to feel

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an irresistible urge toward the north, so that the grave errors of the French command in 1914 and their unpreparedness in 1918 were redressed by the little river whose name will always live in letters of light in the annals of the French Republic.

No more mistakes were to be written on the wrong side of the French and British ledgers. Victory had decided to make her home from that time forward upon their standards. Many and grievous had been their blunders, but more and worse had been the blunders of the foe. "It is only human to make mistakes," said Hindenburg, "and the one who makes the fewest will remain master of the battlefield." Hindenburg's estimate was right. In fact, the great rush of the German steam-roller from the Aisne to the Marne, which looked for all the world like a first-class victory, was instead a disastrous piece of strategy, for the steam-roller had merely pushed such a deep bulge into the French line that it found itself in a pocket, surrounded on three sides by the French, thirsting for revenge, and the new divisions of active, vigorous Americans, eager to show what they could do.

It was right there that the tables were turned. Into an exposed side of that great pocket Foch drove a spear-head of French, Algerians and Americans in mid-July, 1918, and from that time on he kept striking the enemy with lightning blows, now here, now there, like a master boxer, till Germany was ready, on November 11, to accept any terms and end the conflict.

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PART IV

BLUNDERS THAT DROVE RUSSIA BOLSHEVIK

"Strange as it may seem, the Government itself is preparing the Revolution. . . . The Government is doing everything to make as many malcontents as possible, and is succeeding perfectly. We are witnessing the unparalleled spectacle of revolution from above, and not from below."

—Letter from the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch to the Czar, February, 1917.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE TANNENBERG CATASTROPHE

CRASH! Crash! Crash! went the paving stones through the bakery windows. They were the opening shots of the Russian Revolution in March, 1917, but, strangely enough, the people who were smashing the windows did not know this. They were merely hungry and wanted bread. Later, they decided they wanted a revolution, too, but now they just wanted something to eat. So they proceeded to smash things, and ended by smashing the autocracy. And while they were starving, tons of meat were spoiling only a few hours distant by railway, and plenty of grain was to be had for bringing it from the farm lands. Why the meat was left to spoil, why the grain was not brought in, and why the people carried the smashing process right on up to the throne itself is one of the most tragic stories in human history.

Germany expected that the war would bring on a revolution in Russia, and, indeed, counted on it as part of their war plan, and Mr. E. H. Wilcox, correspondent of the London *Daily Telegraph,* who was in Berlin during the week before the outbreak of the war, heard that belief freely spoken everywhere. But, as a matter of fact, Germany's declaration of war made all

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Russia absolutely solid in support of the Government, and it took over two and a half years of the most awful blunders and incompetence by the Russian authorities themselves to shake the loyalty of the people and turn them against the men they blamed for military losses so huge that they have never even yet been reckoned up with anything like accuracy.

The very first big battle was a disaster so colossal that it ranks among the world's most decisive defeats. The battle of Tannenberg will go down in history as a glaring example of what to avoid in military strategy. It was this great victory, of course, that started von Hindenburg's fame and made him the idol of Germany during the war and later President of the German Republic. The very flower of the Russian army was caught in the German pincers, and more than 100,000 Russians were killed, wounded or captured. The Russian commander, Samsonoff, became separated from his staff in their flight on foot through the forest in the night and perished, no one knows how or where.

While the Allied lands were shocked at the news of this defeat, many tried to counter the blow by remarking that Russia had millions of men, and this loss would be easily made up. It was a common error right through the war to speak of "Russia's millions" as if nothing else were necessary. People otherwise intelligent spoke as if war could be carried on with bare hands. It was not merely 100,000 men who were lost. All of their officers were lost, too, from an army mostly unable to read and write and therefore unable

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to provide new officers after brief training. All the artillery, shells, rifles, cartridges, and equipment of every sort of Samsonoff's army were lost, and Russia was poorly able to manufacture such things and hard for imports to reach by land or sea. It is not too much to say that Russia never recovered from this staggering blow.

And the worst of it was that perhaps it need never have happened. Another large Russian army was near at hand, commanded by General Rennenkampf, and the two together greatly outnumbered the German force of Hindenburg and Ludendorff. This is not a mere snap judgment, at a distance of thousands of miles and more than a decade of years. "There is no doubt that a big success might have been attained if Rennenkampf and Samsonoff had moved simultaneously," says General Basil Gourko, who was Chief of the Russian Imperial General Staff from November, 1916, to March, 1917, and Commander in Chief of the Western Russian armies from March to June, 1917. At this time he was a cavalry commander under Rennenkampf, and had just made a brilliant raid through the German lines. He was almost near enough to hear the guns of the great battle, and that is his judgment. Hindenburg tells us how the Germans cleverly left only a thin screen of cavalry in front of Rennenkampf's army, and hurried all the German infantry off to crush Samsonoff. Rennenkampf was completely duped, and stood as if paralyzed while Samsonoff was annihilated. He seemingly never knew the Ger-

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mans were gone from his front, he never knew they were descending like an avalanche on Samsonoff, and, for all the good he did, he might as well have been a thousand miles away.

Ignorance is a costly thing anywhere, but in war it is utterly ruinous. Rennenkampf may not have known what was going on in his own neighborhood; but Samsonoff did not know what was going on in his own army. That was the real secret of the disaster. Hindenburg and Ludendorff, it seems, led Samsonoff's army into a trap. They let the Russian center advance while they folded back the Russian flanks until the Slav army was in a complete pocket, surrounded by a ring of fire, hopelessly caught. Scarcely a handful escaped. Samsonoff, during the battle, was at an observation post with his central corps, and as he saw them advancing he thought he was witnessing a great victory.

Not a word reached him, it appears, of the rout of his two flanks, which was hour by hour preparing his doom. His left wing fell back fifteen miles, leaving that flank totally bare and exposed to all the ferocity of the German assault without the slightest suspicion of it crossing his mind. Eye-witnesses say that from time to time Samsonoff turned to his aides and asked if any word had been received from the flanks. "Each time the answer was in the negative." To most commanders such an absence of news would have seemed ominous. It would have been itself a danger signal, a warning to send out swarms of scouts, if need be, to

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learn the truth. But seemingly not so to the Russian commander. Before his eyes his victorious center was pressing triumphantly forward. Several thousand German prisoners had been taken. Why worry?

Suddenly on every side burst forth the thunder of the German guns, the great jaws of steel and flame closed mercilessly upon the hapless Russians, and as night fell the commander, helpless, alone, a fugitive, perished somewhere in the recesses of the dark forest. Later a medallion among the trinkets taken from the slain was recognized as his, but otherwise no trace of him was seen again. The lesson is as clear as a, b, c. As General Gourko puts it: "Destitute of any information concerning the other troops under his control, Samsonoff lost all power of directing operations, and thus infringed one of the elementary rules of military strategy."

Like lightning, of course, Hindenburg and Ludendorff then turned to strike at the other Russian army commanded by Rennenkampf. After a feeble attempt at resistance, Rennenkampf wisely decided to retreat, and not only ordered his army to do so, but set the example by retreating faster than anyone else. He "lost all self-control," reports General Gourko, "and, leaving his staff, departed by motor car for the Russian frontier. He eventually arrived at Kovno, abandoning all power over his forces and leaving them to get through the hazards of the retreat fight on their own account." In this retreat another 100,000 men and officers were lost, with uncounted stores and equip-

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ment of every description which Russia could not easily replace.

The populace of Petrograd and Moscow, who had been shouting "On to Berlin!" were stunned. Their hope of taking the Kaiser prisoner by Christmas turned to ashes. But worse yet, whispers began to get about that these huge defeats were due to treason. People recalled that Rennenkampf had German blood, and it was rumored that he had a brother in the German army. A few weeks later, in November, 1914, two German army corps were surrounded much as the two corps of Samsonoff were encircled at Tannenberg, and when they fought their way out, Rennenkampf was blamed for it and deposed from his command. Popular confidence was shaken. It was the first jar, the first rumble, of the earthquake that was at last to topple the throne of the Czars into the dust.

The usual explanation of these disasters is that Russia threw her armies into the fray before they were ready in order to save France, which was being overrun by the gray German hosts and had appealed to Russia for aid. Thus Russia sacrificed herself to rescue France. No doubt that is true, and the invasion of East Prussia by Samsonoff and Rennenkampf drew away strong German forces from the Western front and helped to make the victory of the Marne possible. But we must not forget that if France had been crushed, Russia would have been next on the German program, so that Russia's thrust was to save Russia just as truly as it was to save France. The Russian

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army may not have been ready, but wars do not wait for nations to be ready. In battle, excuses are of no avail. "Be ready," is the only reply, and is the supreme lesson of it all. Then, too, no amount of excuses can clear generals who fail to unite or even coöperate with each other in the face of the enemy, who do not know when the foe has withdrawn from their front, and who do not even know what the flanks of their own armies are doing.

Many farm buildings in East Prussia are built of stone, and when the Russians invaded that region the German troops made every farm a little fort, which the Russian guns were powerless to reduce. But whenever the Russian forces tried to take shelter in the stone farmsteads, the German artillery promptly blew them to smithereens, killing and wounding more men with flying chips of stone than if they had stayed in the open.

This gives a good idea of the difference between the Russian and German artillery and, in fact, between pretty much all the Russian and German equipment, and tells in essence the reason for the tremendous Russian catastrophe. There was a failure of artillery, of shells, of rifles, of cartridges, of clothing, of railways, of coal, of food, of everything except the men, who fought like tigers through incredible privations until Soviet propaganda told them it was useless to fight any longer. Regiments charged the splendidly equipped troops of Germany and Austria, armed partly with rifles and partly with sticks and stones.

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When sticks and stones were gone, they pulled off their big boots to club foes armed with the most modern weapons. Whatever and whoever else failed, it was not Ivan. Through it all, he was more than splendid.

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CHAPTER XIX

WAS THE WAR MINISTER A TRAITOR?

WELL, then, who was to blame? It must be someone, for such frightful things do not just come of themselves or happen out of nothing at all. Let us have a look at the Minister of War, General Sukhomlinoff. He held this vital post for five years before the war, and therefore was in a position to mold the army very much as he liked. What sort of man was he? Let us see him through the eyes of the French Ambassador to Russia, who had every reason in the world to wish well for the Russian army. Ambassador Maurice Paleologue etches his pictures of the Czar's court in his Memoirs with vivid strokes. After a long conference in August, 1914, with the War Minister he wrote in his diary:

> "There is somehing about General Sukhomlinoff that makes one uneasy. Sixty-two years of age, the slave of a rather pretty wife thirty-two years younger than himself, intelligent, clever and charming, obsequious toward the Czar and a friend of Rasputin, surrounded by a rabble who serve as go-betweens in his intrigues and duplicities, he is a man who has lost the habit of work

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and keeps all his strength for conjugal joys. With his sly look, his eyes always gleaming watchfully under the heavy folds of his eyelids, I know few men who inspire more distrust at first sight."

That is a French view. For a Russian view we need not go to the radicals, to the revolutionaries who tried him and sentenced him to penal servitude for life. We can go to a Czarist of the old school, a Russian Premier who was assassinated at the Czar's side in a theater at Kieff in 1911. As Stolypin lay dying, he said to the Minister of Finance: "The national defense is in the hands of an unworthy man. He is untrustworthy, and cannot inspire the necessary respect. The disorder in his department alarms me. He will bring us to ruin." This remark would seem to lend support to the belief that the dying see things that are hidden from the living, for it came true in a more ruinous way than anyone dreamed.

Just before the war began, Sukhomlinoff wrote or inspired an article in a Petrograd newspaper assuring the nation that the army was fully prepared in every particular, and in 1916, after myriads of Russia's best had been sacrificed on the altar of unpreparedness, an irate member of the Duma—not a radical, either—shouted at the Cabinet:

"Where is the scoundrel who deceived us all with lying assurances of our readiness for this terrible struggle, who tore from the brows of our army its wreaths of laurel and trampled them in the mire of corruption

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and treachery, who placed himself between the sword of retribution and the traitor Miasoyedoff? True, Miasoyedoff has paid the penalty, but where is the head of his guarantor? On shoulders still adorned with the imperial monogram!"

Here, then, we see the name of the War Minister actually linked with that of a traitor. How did such a surprising companionship as that ever happen? To find the answer we must adopt the French proverb and "look for the woman." The French have found that a search of that kind discovers the key to many riddles, and it will do the trick in this dark and puzzling case. "Shake off these traitors and grafters who surround you," said a Russian general to Sukhomlinoff more than once, but the War Minister would reply: "My friend, I do not like these people, but what can I do when my wife loves them so?" Poor, helpless old man! He was sixty-two, his wife thirty-two years younger. Why say more? Whatever little Ekaterina wanted of course she must have, no matter how fantastic, no matter if it meant ruin for the army, for the empire and for the throne itself.

Conjugal love is a beautiful thing, and every husband should love his wife, but Sukhomlinoff seemed to be out to break all records. He not only loved the charming Ekaterina as his own wife, but began loving her when she was the wife of someone else. Her husband, however, was so intoxicated by her charms that he refused to divorce her till she threatened suicide and actually claimed she had swallowed poison. "Sign

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this paper agreeing to the divorce and I will take an antidote. Otherwise I die!" she exclaimed. The distracted dupe signed with trembling hand, only to discover later that the paper also bound him to pay her $100,000!

So Ekaterina and her aged suitor were wedded, five years before the war, and the money squeezing process, which had worked so well on her first husband, was transferred in full force to Sukhomlinoff. Ekaterina found her health required trips to all the famous European spas and pleasure resorts, with Sukhomlinoff left at home to dig up the funds. How can a War Minister lay his hands on money, especially when he has rich contracts to give out, and is surrounded by a coterie of scalawags and blacklegs? His whole circle, as the picture came out at his trial, seemed like some evil phantasmagoria of demons and witches dancing a death-spell for unhappy Russia. The trial, in fact, as a British authority puts it, "was the great justification of the revolution." Readers who wish to know more about it, about the romantic career of the fair Ekaterina, and about the traitorous doings of Miasoyedoff, whose story would make a book by itself, will find it all well told in a volume called "Russia's Ruin," by Mr. E. H. Wilcox, who was correspondent of the London *Daily Telegraph* at Petrograd.

No trial was needed, however, to convince the people of Russia. No one could perform as Sukhomlinoff did upon the brilliantly illuminated stage of Petrograd without stirring up the bitterest feeling. Public opinion

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held him to blame for all the defeats and sufferings of the army, and the soldiers, it is said, could hardly be held back from tearing him to pieces in the early days of the revolution. Some people have the mistaken idea that in an illiterate land like Russia, a land of few newspapers, and even those few choked into silence by strict censorship, the people are ignorant of what is going on. Any such notion is far from the truth. All illiterate and backward lands are like huge whispering galleries, where every rumor runs like wildfire from hut to hut and from village to village, often magnified and distorted beyond recognition until the doings of a Sukhomlinoff, for instance, rouse even the stolid and patient moujiks to tear the crown from the brow of their Czar.

It is a curious fact that some of the bitterest critics of Sukhomlinoff think he was nothing worse than lazy and deceitful. Paleologue, the French Ambassador, who got him dismissed from office in June, 1915, doubts if he could be really called a traitor. True, he had traitors about him and shut his eyes to their crimes; true, he hated the Commander of the army, Grand Duke Nicholas, and tried to thwart his plans secretly; true, his inaction and deceit caused the scarcity of munitions that was to blame for the colossal defeats of 1914, but the Ambassador would not say he was guilty of anything worse than that!

Another expert witness is M. Serge Sazonov, who was Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and sat at the same table with Sukhomlinoff at meetings of the

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cabinet. He does not criticize Sukhomlinoff for his political opinions, "for he had none." He merely criticizes him because he had "a complete absence of the qualities necessary to a Minister of War." "It was hard enough to make him work," says Sazonov, "but to get him to speak the truth was well-nigh impossible." In fact, he was "a regular calamity." It was Sazonov who worked with Paleologue to get him put out.

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CHAPTER XX

NO GUNS, NO SHELLS, NO BOOTS

As if it was not enough to have the War Ministry in this frightful state, it seems that the artillery department was in even worse chaos. The French Ambassador at Petrograd was horrified when he learned how the Russian soldiers were being mown down at the front by German shells because the Russians had neither the guns nor the ammunition to reply. Major General Knox, an official British observer, testifies to the same thing in his volumes, "With the Russian Army." In some cases the Germans planted their guns in the open and shelled the Russian trenches as they pleased because the Russians were unable to return the fire. The Russian losses naturally were terrific. The Grand Duke Sergei, who was at the head of the artillery department, testified that even at the start of the war there were brigades with no guns at all and guns with no ammunition wagons.

The rifle situation was even more tragic. When the war broke out, the government factories were making only six rifles a day, and when two thousand per day were demanded, they simply could not do it. The first troops sent to the front were fully equipped, but the reënforcements had but one rifle for every two men.

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Then, we are told, it became one for every four, six, eight, ten, till at last whole companies arrived without a single rifle among them. That was the testimony at the Sukhomlinoff trial, as related by Mr. Wilcox. The war had not been under way two months when a detachment of reënforcements was sent to General Alexeieff on the Galician front absolutely unarmed. Regiments went into battle with rifles in the hands of the forward lines, and the rest were expected to arm themselves by picking up the guns of the killed and wounded. Is it any wonder Ivan finally decided it was useless to keep on with such tactics?

The famine of guns and shells reached such a pass that at some points the Russian artillery could fire only one shot a day, while the Germans were firing thousands. Here was something every soldier could see, and the long trainloads of wounded going to the rear carried thousands of eye-witnesses who took the story to their homes, here, there, and everywhere throughout the realm of Nicholas. Demoralization in the army set in. Generals spoke of the necessity of making peace. Even the Commander in Chief, Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaievitch, declared to the President of the Duma in March, 1915, that it would soon be impossible for Russia to continue the war, "for one can not lead to victory troops who are without boots, without rifles, and without shells." Nor was the Grand Duke at all ahead of his men in reaching this decision. The poor fellows who were shoved into battle to face the Germans with bare hands decided it was better to be live

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prisoners than dead heroes, and surrendered by thousands. In the last half of November, 1914, alone, the Germans claimed the capture of 80,000 unwounded Russians.

Such figures, piled on top of the losses by death and wounds, made a staggering total. In the five weeks from November 1 to December 5, 1914, the Russian army lost over half a million men. These almost incredible figures were obtained at the time by the French Ambassador from official sources. By the following April General Knox, British observer with the Russian armies, figured the total Russian losses from all causes at around two million. Such was the awful price paid by the peasants for the stupidity, corruption, and incompetence of those in high places who blundered and failed in their clear and plain duty. "We are paying for the crimes of our administration with the blood of our men," said a Russian officer to a French attaché. To suppose that such losses would not start talk, critical talk, rebellious talk, revolutionary talk, would be to suppose the impossible. Petrograd had sown the wind; the murmur of the whirlwind was beginning to be audible.

The Chief of the General Staff in Petrograd was General Yanushkevitch, who had had no war experience. Even the incompetent Sukhomlinoff remarked that "Our Chief of the General Staff is still a child." His selection seemed incomprehensible to the London *Times* correspondent in Petrograd, although of course he did not say so until after the war. A beautiful thing

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about war is that it makes everything that we or our allies do the wisest and best that was ever known. Every appointment is ideal. No one is ever retired except for "ill-health." Every retreat is for "strategic reasons" and "upsets the foe's plans." So no criticism of General Yanushkevitch was breathed in the press of Allied lands. However, it seems that he had terminated his army career after commanding a battalion for four months, without seeing any active service. Later he landed a place in the Staff College, rose by a series of lucky jumps to be chief of the college and was made Chief of the General Staff by the notorious War Minister, Sukhomlinoff, "the all powerful Minister not wishing to have a man of strong and independent personality in occupation of this high post." That is the view of Mr. Robert Wilton, the *Times* representative, as given in his book on "Russia's Agony." From Chief of the General Staff he became Chief of Staff to the Supreme Commander in Chief, issuing orders to millions of men, a post where a mistake might mean a shocking tragedy. "Was it surprising under these circumstances," asks Mr. Wilton, "that the Russian army showed a lamentable deficiency in leadership? Army group commanders apparently did what they thought fit, without coördination between munitionment and strategy." Other appointments were of the same sort, and, he concludes sadly, "the disasters in East Prussia and in Galicia were inevitable."

The General Staff of the army is like the brain of the human organism, correlating and harmonizing all

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its activities. Its importance cannot be exaggerated. Yet at the outbreak of the war the War Ministry closed the Academy of the General Staff on the idea that the war would soon be over and no more staff officers would be needed! It was two years before this serious error was remedied, and by that time matters were in such a terrible state that it made little difference what was done.

The brilliant idea, too, was conceived, a few years before the war, of destroying the old forts around Warsaw and Zegrje and building a new and better belt of fortifications to take their place. Almost any other nation would naturally keep the old ones until the new were done, but of course the Russian authorities, in 1912, destroyed the old works with explosives and then dallied along until the war burst upon them, without one of the new forts even started. General Gourko, who relates this piece of mismanagement, confesses, "I never have been and never shall be able to explain it," and that seems to be about the frankest way to leave it. When the Germans attacked Warsaw, the shattered ruins of the old forts stood as a silent verdict on the folly of Russian war-making.

The gang of spies and traitors who were among the closest friends of Russia's Minister of War were but a fraction of the vast German spy system that penetrated all Russian society. Berlin and Vienna knew every plan, every order, of the Russian government. Spies scanned secret reports, confidential instructions, correspondence with the Allies, and hurried the news

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to the enemy. When not busy in the largest snooping campaign the world has ever known, they busied themselves in spreading propaganda, sowing the seeds of distrust and discord.

The most mischievous thing of this kind was the report that the Czar and Czarina were really pro-German and were betraying the people. Not a shred of proof of this awful charge has ever been produced, and nobody who has read the letters of the Czarina to the Czar, discovered and published after they were murdered, can credit the accusation for a moment, but it found believers at the time and played its part in raising the Bolshevist hurricane. The spies encouraged the belief that it was in vain for the soldiers to fight on, and the men surrendered in thousands and tens of thousands, and were promptly put to work by Germany in the fields and factories, releasing an equal number of Germans for the army. All through the war the myriads of traitors and spies kept up these activities, and yet the government took no effectual measures to stamp them out.

Then, too, as if all these catastrophic blunders were not enough, the government had to muddle the entire railway and industrial organization of the empire into a hopeless hash that made disaster an absolute certainty. When the army was mobilized, it was considered unfair to draft the men from the farms only, so the men from the railways, the railway repair shops and the coal mines were also taken. In a short time, of course, the output of coal began to fall off. With a

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coal shortage, all kinds of metal production and metal working slowed up, so that locomotives and rolling stock could not be made or repaired. The sidings filled up with long lines of useless cars and engines, producing a car and locomotive famine that hampered the transportation of coal. The less coal, the less cars; the less cars, the less coal—a "vicious circle," growing worse month by month and day by day.

The crisis grew so sharp that even the British Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, was having great difficulty in getting fuel to heat the Embassy. One day, after he had just been told it was "impossible" to get any coal for him, he was walking along the street with the French Ambassador when he suddenly stopped and exclaimed: "By Jove! That's a bit too thick!" Across the way were two big army trucks heaped high with coal, which a squad of soldiers were carrying into the cellar of the house of an opera dancer reported to be "under the protection" of a Grand Duke! If the scene was "a bit too thick" for Sir George, we can imagine the remarks of the shivering work people and their reflections on the blessings of aristocratic rule.

A French officer, who was sent to Russia on a war mission, solved the transportation problem very happily. As he related it to the writer during a tour of the French battlefields, he was told when he landed at Archangel that transportation was impossible, so he bought a freight car outright, rigged it out with a stove, bed, canned provisions, etc., and induced the train crew to take his home-made private car hither

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and thither around Russia wherever his instructions sent him. Writers who were on the spot during the railway crisis say it was made even worse by the epidemic of graft that cursed the country. Empty cars would not be given to shippers without a fat tip, and in some cases the graft took all the profit out of a shipment so that it was not worth while to send it.

As the railways became more and more crippled, it grew harder and harder to even carry the food from the farms to the army and to the towns, to carry the soldiers and the munitions to the front and the wounded to the rear. Grain brought to the railway stations could not be carried to the mills; the mills were idle for lack of fuel. Meat was left to spoil at one place while people starved at another. Whole towns could work but a few hours in the short winter days, as no kerosene or other illumination could be had, and sunset left the people in darkness. Huge piles of arms and ammunition sent by the Allies lay along the shore at the northern ports, because the railways could not move them, and at the same time the Russian government was begging France and England to send more.

Not less than 1,500,000 rounds of ammunition, 6,000,000 grenades, 50,000 rifles, and 70 heavy guns were lying idle on the quays of Archangel, awaiting railway transportation. As the French and English were fighting for their lives on the western front, and guns and shells were precious as jewels, they hinted that it would be well to transport these heaps to the Russian front first, but the suggestion was received

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with little warmth. More amazing still is the revelation by Winston Churchill that in 1915 the Czar vetoed a plan that might have won the war three years sooner. The Russian armies were being hammered to pieces at that time, and driven backward by Hindenburg and Ludendorff as the sheep are driven by the wolves. The Dardanelles expedition, however, was on the eve of success, with Greek aid all arranged, and would have opened the Straits and poured food, coal, guns, shells, rifles and troops into Russia in a rescuing flood. But at that moment the whole plan for Greek cooperation was sharply vetoed by the Czar, who feared the Greeks might claim Constantinople! Greek aid was declined, and the expedition failed miserably. In recording blunders, that one seems like a strong candidate for the blue ribbon. In Churchill's view, but for that veto, Nicholas might be on his throne today.

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CHAPTER XXI

THE GREAT RETREAT

IMAGINE the exultation at the German General Headquarters when the helpless plight of the Russian armies was realized; imagine the handclasps; imagine the deep, loud "Hochs!" as the foaming steins were held high and drained dry. The dreaded millions of the Czar had been the bugaboo of all the Germans living anywhere near the Russian border for time out of mind. The Cossacks, especially, were supposed to carve adults up into inch pieces and eat babies for breakfast. Now it turned out, after a few months' campaign, that these terrible armies were a joke. They were not only short of rifles, but some regiments were armed with defective pieces that exploded in their hands and killed the men who tried to fire them. Orders were sent out by the Russian staff by wireless in plain language, and the Germans easily listened in on all their plans, so that spies for once were superfluous. Officers had maps so old that they were useless, and wandered about with their commands until hopelessly bewildered and lost.

The Czar himself, on a visit to the front, went out for an automobile ride but had to return as the road map was eighteen years old, new towns had sprung up,

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old forests had been cut down, and the map was worthless. His Majesty found it very amusing. But the German chiefs were even more amused by all this. It was clear as daylight that the Russian bogey was a man of straw. A breath would blow him away—a breath from the massed batteries of German artillery. The supply of German guns was almost endless and the supply of shells almost infinite, while the Russian supply of both was at the point of starvation. The Kaiser's men, too, had quantities of heavy artillery that far outranged the smaller field pieces of the Czar.

Any schoolboy would be general enough for a situation like that. He could win a snowball battle with like odds. Yet the military reputations of Hindenburg and Ludendorff are founded on their victories over the almost defenseless hordes of Nicholas II. Their method was so simple that it seems almost superfluous to set it down here. During the winter of 1914-15, they produced a vast number of heavy field-howitzers and huge amounts of high-explosive shell, insuring such a deluge of death as the world had never seen. The plan was to turn this hail of destruction loose on the Russian trenches, blow them out of existence, and then move forward and repeat the operation over and over as long as desired. The Russians, as they knew, could not reply.

Well, the great drive started on April 28, 1915, on the Dunajec River, and, as related by Captain Frothingham in his "Military History of the World War," "the result was immediately decisive, and fulfilled all

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the expectations of the German Command. The hapless Russians were literally blasted out of their trenches by artillery fire. The surprise was complete, and there was no defense possible." The rest of the story followed the opening chapter like a, b, c. The push in the south was followed by a push in the north, and that was followed by a push in the center. At no point, of course, could the half-armed Russians stand against the German hurricane of fire and steel.

Whole armies, like the force in the Carpathians, were nearly cut off, and had to retreat pell-mell to avoid being left behind. City after city, fortress after fortress, fell with the regularity of clockwork. Resistance only revealed the futility of it. An attempt to stem the tide was made at the great fortress of Novo Georgievsk, and it was well garrisoned, munitioned and provisioned for a siege, but the big German guns made quick work of it and it fell in short order with a loss of 700 guns which Russia could ill spare.

Back, back, back, went the Russian line, 900 miles long, stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Carpathian Mountains. Back they fell, all summer long, losing enormous numbers of men, guns, munitions, and supplies of every kind, their footsteps forever dogged by that fiery lash of German shell that knew no mercy and no rest. In the north, the weary moujiks fell back more than a hundred miles before the German chiefs decided it was enough. In the south, the retreat covered over two hundred miles.

Through May and June they went, through the heat

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and dust of July and August, then on through September until the cooling nights warned the German command to stabilize their line before the Russian winter set in. Germany, too, had other plans in hand, and so left the Russian giant to welter in his agony, while Mackensen and his army hurried off to devastate devoted Serbia with fire and sword. It was at the beginning of September that the Czar tried to rally his armies by taking command in person, but the only effect was to give free rein to the evil forces in Petrograd, left without his control, and so merely hasten the final catastrophe.

The terrific holocaust of life along the 900 mile front during that red summer we may easily trace to the criminal neglect of men who were entrusted with the task of preparing their country for defense, and betrayed the trust.

But other consequences followed, too. Bulgaria, after hesitating and faltering more than a year, decided that Germany looked like a winner, and joined in the attack that crushed Serbia into the dust. Roumania, which had been inclined toward the Allies, shivered and drew back for a time. These two Balkan decisions, both due to the Russian debacle, delayed the Allied victory and hence cost thousands of lives on both sides in all the warring lands, that would have been spared by an earlier peace.

The Russian losses have never been figured with anything like accuracy, but, as Captain Frothingham says, "not only was it the most disastrous campaign in

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all history, but the disaster was so great that there could be no comparison with any other campaign." Falkenhayn, on the German side, states that Russia lost in the first three months "about three-quarters of a million men in prisoners alone." This is easily credible when the French Ambassador at Petrograd wrote in his diary on May 13 that "the total number of prisoners left in the enemy's hands in the last ten days is said to amount to 140,000." That was at the start of the big German push. Later, on August 30, when the drive was nearly done, he wrote again: "The losses of the Russian army have been colossal. From 350,000 a month in May, June and July, the figure had risen to 450,000 in August. Since the first defeat on the Dunajec the Russian army has lost approximately 1,500,000 men." Just for comparison, recall that the world was horrified the following year when France lost 500,000 men in the same period of time at Verdun. The vast proportions of Russia's tragedy have never been rightly realized. At Verdun Germany tried exactly the same tactics against French preparedness that she tried against Russian unpreparedness, and met a stone wall. The contrast between Verdun and the Dunajec is the lesson that spells safety or disaster to nations that read or ignore it.

It staggers the human mind to try to imagine that horrible retreat across Russia during the spring, summer, and autumn of 1915. Remember it was not merely the army that was falling back before the terrible German rain of fire—all the local population, too,

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terrified by the roaring guns and bursting shells, picked up what they could, piled the aged and the sick on their little farm carts, and went sadly forth from their homes to travel they knew not where. Death might be waiting before them by exposure and starvation, but it strode behind them in fire and flame, so forward they fared, to meet whatever fate had in store.

At first their numbers were comparatively few, of course, and the emigration was no worse than might be expected. But as the human flood rolled on it gathered in more and more from cities, towns, hamlets and farms, and grew like a rolling snowball. It became a vast mob. All order was lost. Law disappeared. All roads were choked. The vast exodus was like the progress of a swarm of locusts. Food of every sort for man and beast was swept away like magic. Disease appeared, aggravated by starvation and exposure to rain and wind. The weaker ones succumbed, and the traveler today will find the path of the great retreat dotted with little hillocks showing where mothers, babies, grandparents, fathers, sons, gave up the sad struggle and left the rest to make their escape as best they might.

In many places the roads paralleled the railways, which were reserved for military use, and the agonized refugees often saw trains speeding past half empty or sometimes loaded with officers' effects, gilt furniture, bird cages and other frippery, while they toiled on through the mud. As the fall days came, snow fell and turned to slush, freezing at night and causing

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intense suffering and widespread disease. Still the German guns thundered behind, and still the huge throngs must tread their Golgotha of sorrow. Men who had seen bloody battles told General Gourko that no horrors of the battlefield could even be compared to the awful spectacle of the ceaseless exodus of an entire population who knew not where they were going nor where they ever might find rest, food or shelter.

We must remember, too, that this vast trek of men, women, children, horses, cattle, and carts was only just ahead of the retreating army, which was thus held up and hampered enormously in every move it made. Often the army had to stop and fight a rear-guard action to keep from trampling on the fleeing refugees. Unfortunately, when the army stopped to fight, the refugees would stop too. "Now we are going to beat the Germans and can go back home." But it was not to be. Instead, the army would be routed again, and would pour over, through and around the refugee camps, and the poor peasants would find themselves in a moment captured by the Germans they had been fleeing from for weeks and months. "God only knows," exclaimed General Gourko, "what sufferings were endured, how many tears were shed, and how many human lives were given as victims to the inexorable Moloch of War!"

What concerns us here is the tremendous feeling that was stirred up all over Russia by this huge flight, this awful path of sorrow, suffering and death. We must remember that these millions of fugitives, seek-

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ing shelter anywhere, penetrated to all parts of Russia, and during the long evenings of the next winter told the inside story of the great Russian disaster to listening villages whose sons, brothers and fathers had been sacrificed at the front on the altar of official incompetence, greed and graft. No censorship, no ohrana, or secret police, could stop those tongues. The story of guns with no shells, of men with no rifles, was told at thousands of firesides to eager listeners. "It must be the Little Father does not know about this." There was still time then for the Little Father to turn the rascals out and retain the loyalty of his people. But the chance was passing, and unluckily the Little Father was too late.

Another feature of this refugee rout that added fuel to the flame of the revolution was the outrageous treatment of the Jews. Some people blame the Jews for the part they took in the Bolshevist revolution; but consider for a moment the provocation they had. Everyone knows, of course, about the pogroms, or massacres, of Jews that were frequent affairs in Russia under the Czar's rule before the war. True, the Jews were accused of getting the better of the simple Russian peasants in horse-trades and every other kind of trade, but massacres seem a rather drastic method of getting even. The Turks used to make the same excuse for massacring the Armenians—who were also too sharp in their bargains. The Russian peasant was simply helpless in a business deal, and when he found himself outwitted he saw red and murdered wholesale.

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It is perhaps not surprising that the Jews felt a certain resentment at this treatment, or that their loyalty to the Czar was not the strongest in the world. Russian Poland, situated right on the battle front, was full of Jews, and when the Russian defeats began, the cry went up that the Jews were spies and traitors, sending information to the Germans. When we remember that Petrograd was simply packed with spies and traitors without a drop of Jewish blood in their veins, who informed Berlin of every plan, order, and report, this charge against the poor Jews in Poland seems almost comic.

The spies and traitors in Petrograd rode about in high-powered limousines, but the Jews in Poland were driven from their homes along the front with whips. As the front retreated, they were whipped along from town to town, and were received with hostility and abuse in every place where they tried to take refuge. It was remarked at a meeting of the Council of Ministers in Petrograd on August 12, 1915, that "this Jewish mass is extremely embittered . . . and becomes revolutionary." Not a very surprising discovery, to say the least.

The fearful flight of the refugees was partly voluntary, but was also planned and ordered by Headquarters, and was another of its disastrous blunders. Russia has always taken immense pride in the brilliant stroke of strategy in 1812, when Napoleon's great invasion was met by a mass retreat which left the French to enter an empty and desolate country merely to capture

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a burning and deserted Moscow. With no way to get supplies, Napoleon's Grand Army dwindled away by starvation and disease, and few of them survived ever to see France again. It was the beginning of Napoleon's downfall, and it was the great retreat that did it.

So now the same tactics were to be used to defeat the Kaiser, who liked to think he was another Napoleon. Accordingly, when any of the population behind the retreating army declined to join the mob of refugees, the military authorities gave them a few hours to collect their effects, burned everything else, and roughly ordered them to move on. This class of refugees "is the largest and most embittered," it was remarked at the cabinet meeting of August 12. If they had been allowed to stay behind and fall into the enemy's hands, then the Germans, already short of food, would have had them to feed, but instead, "this embittered mass of humanity spreads like a flood in all directions. . . . They die by the hundreds from hunger, thirst, and disease . . . they sharpen the difficulties of waging the war, they bring on food crises, raise the high cost of living, and excite the already aroused population." The record of this frank cabinet meeting, where the disastrous consequences of the error were clearly admitted, is preserved for us in "The Documents of Russian History" in the Century Historical Series, where those who are interested can follow the matter further. Five days later, at another cabinet meeting, one of the Ministers, Krivoshein, put

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it in such strong words that it is impossible to give it more clearly. He said:

"Of all the grave consequences of the war, this one is the most unexpected, the most serious, and the most difficult to remedy. It has been worked out by the wise strategists to frighten the enemy. Misery, sickness, sorrow and poverty go with the refugees all over Russia. They create panics wherever they go and put out whatever still remains of the ardor of the first days of the war. They move like a wall, knocking down the grain, trampling down the plowed fields, and destroying the forests. Their trail is like that of the flight of locusts or the bands of Tamerlane on the warpath. I have an idea that the Germans watch with pleasure the result of this attempt to repeat the tactics of 1812. If on the one hand the Germans are deprived of certain local provisions, they are, on the other hand, freed from the care of the population, and have full freedom of action in the depopulated areas. In my capacity as a member of the Council of Ministers I should like to say that this undertaking of Headquarters to bring about a second migration of peoples will lead Russia into darkness, revolution, and ruin."

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CHAPTER XXII

MURMURS OF THE WHIRLWIND

DISCONTENT, in fact, was now rife all over the country. Graft and profiteering were rampant. The newly-rich flaunted their furs, diamonds and glistening motor cars in the faces of workers suffering from hunger and cold. The disorganization of the railroads created a scarcity of coal and provisions when there was really plenty of these necessaries within easy reach. The resulting high cost of living caused strikes in the factories, which in turn caused more distress and discontent. The soldiers' rations had to be reduced, and rumors started in the ranks that grafting officials were getting rich out of it.

No story of skulduggery was too wild for belief, doubtless helped on by the ever-ready German spy system and propaganda mongers. The men heard tales of huge speculations in food, saw the luxurious automobiles purring up and down the avenues, and decided the food-scarcity was a clever piece of profiteering or a pro-German plot to incite a revolution. Either way, they were convinced that Russia was being betrayed. But if the soldiers were on short rations, the workers were sometimes on no rations at all. Boots and shoes were also unobtainable. Mr. Robert Wilton, Petro-

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grad correspondent of the London *Times,* says in his book on "Russia's Agony" that he saw thousands of people waiting all night in the hope of buying a pair of boots, glad to pay any sum, and actually having to pay anywhere from $25 to $50. Overcoats worth $10 or $15 brought $60 to $100. Under Bolshevism, which was supposed to bring heaven on earth, these prices rose tenfold. A pair of shoes took a month's wages, says this observer, leaving nothing for food.

True, the peasants on the farms had food, but no clothing. The cloth had all been taken for the army, so rough homespun and the skins of sheep and other animals were the mode among the peasantry. Factory workers found it almost impossible to live. Rodzianko, a man of great ability and public spirit, who was president of the third and fourth Dumas, wrote to Premier Goremykin and warned him that if matters were not mended, the factories doing war work must close, and there would be a famine in Petrograd and Moscow, with all the disorders that might follow. "It is clear to me," he added darkly, "that our country is on the road to ruin, thanks to the complete apathy of the government authorities, who do nothing to remove the causes that lead to ruin." That was the view of one of the leading men in Russian public life.

Let us turn to the opinion of one of Russia's chief business men. Putilov was a multimillionaire, the most important metallurgist and financier in the realm of the Czar, and on June 2, 1915, while the great retreat was in full swing, he invited the French Ambassador

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to dinner. Upon his return to the Embassy, M. Paleologue wrote down in his diary his impressions of the evening. Putilov was a man of "most original psychology," he said. He had "the dominating characteristics of an American business man, the creative instinct and spirit of initiative, the craving for vast undertakings, a strict sense of reality and of the feasible values and forces." When we go on to read what he said to the Ambassador we can see that M. Paleologue summed him up precisely right. He had "a strict sense of reality" indeed. After describing the fatal consequences of the imminent catastrophes and the silent work of decadence and dislocation which was undermining the Russian edifice, he declared solemnly: "The days of Czarism are numbered; it is lost—lost beyond hope!"

Remember that this prediction was made nearly two years before the revolution, which did not come until the spring of 1917. Revolution was "inevitable," continued Putilov; it was merely biding its time, awaiting its opportunity. Its chance would come with some big defeat, some famine, strike, or riot, or maybe some tragedy or scandal in the imperial palace itself. But that would not be the worst of it. Other countries have had revolutions, and have come out of them rather better than before, if anything, like France and England, for example. But not Russia. For Russia had only a tiny educated class, too weak to swing a revolution into the right channels. "To my mind that is the greatest crime of Czarism," said Putilov with rare

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penetration and sagacity, "it will not tolerate any center of political life and activity outside its own bureaucracy." For that reason when the crash should come, "the whole Russian state will dissolve," he predicted. "From the bourgeois revolution we shall at once descend to the working class revolution and soon after to the peasant revolution. And then will begin the most frightful anarchy, ten years of anarchy!" Putilov knew his Ivan.

And while such utterances were being made in private, the voice of discontent was growing audible in the Duma. It was the far-off hum of the coming whirlwind. In public session and private session alike, says the Ambassador in his diary, there was a constant and implacable diatribe against the conduct of the war. The blunders were coming home to their authors. All the faults of the bureaucracy were denounced and all the vices of Czarism were dragged out into the light of day. The same conclusion seemed to recur over and over like a refrain: "Enough of lies! Enough of crimes! Reforms! Retribution! We must transform the system from top to bottom."

Even at this time, however, the murmurings were not aimed at ending the war—they were all aimed in the direction of correcting the mistakes of the war, rooting out the blunderers, and prosecuting the war more vigorously than ever. Observers on the spot say that the revolution was primarily a war-movement, not a peace movement. As Milyoukoff afterward put it: "We persistently declared that the former government

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was not in a position to organize the country for war, and precisely that was the immediate reason of our participation in the revolution." Many believe that if the Czar had put able men in charge of the government at the start of the war, instead of entrusting it to a ring of incompetents, and had granted the people a constitutional form of government, so that the Duma could have held the Ministers to their tasks, the history of the war and of Russia would have been a different story. It is one of the saddest pages of all history to see the pathetic eagerness of the peasants to fight for holy Russia and the Little Father, and then see them slaughtered, maimed, starved, frozen, disheartened, disillusioned and driven to revolt and bolshevism by the incredible fumbles and stupidity of the very men chosen to be their leaders and guardians.

Indeed, it is not too much to say that the Ministers overthrew their own government, and the Czar and Czarina overturned the throne. Such at least was the view of their own imperial relatives, who certainly could not be called radicals or bolshevists. That is to say, their own errors brought ruin crashing down upon their heads in spite of all the warnings, protests, and agonized entreaties of their best friends. On the very eve of the revolution, in February, 1917, the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch wrote the Czar that, "strange as it may be, the government itself is the organ that is preparing the revolution." The nation "does not want it," he added, "but the government is doing everything to make as many malcontents as pos-

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sible, and is succeeding perfectly," and he closed his letter by saying: "We are witnessing the unparalleled spectacle of revolution from above and not from below."

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CHAPTER XXIII

STRANGE COUNCILORS

In the first place, the Ministers presented probably the strangest picture to be seen in any government in Europe. We have already taken a hasty survey of Sukhmolinoff, the wife-worshiping War Minister. The President of the Council of Ministers was Goremykin, a man of 85, described by another Minister who sat at the same Council table as "a decrepit old man, only half alive." He was alive enough, however, to know on which side his bread was buttered, as the homely old saying has it, so he kept up a firm friendship with Rasputin, and was a frequent visitor at the palace and had the support of the Czarina. He had enemies in the Council, but with Rasputin and the Czarina at his back he could snap his fingers at them.

His bitterest foe at the Council table was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Serge Sazonov, and the two were soon at the head of two rival factions in the Council. Goremykin and his group were opposed to the Duma and all its demands for reform, while Sazonov and his group favored reforms to save Russia from revolution. Sazonov tells the story in his interesting volume, "Fateful Years," where he outlines in detail his struggle in the Council with the tenacious old man who was determined to keep the autocracy unchanged.

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Sazonov and his friends became convinced, he tells us, that "if no limit were put to the reactionary policy of the government, it would soon be overtaken by a final catastrophe." At every step, he goes on to say, "it made mistakes and was so unpopular that even the moderate sections of Russian society blamed it for its blunders."

The situation was all the more terrible because Sazonov was convinced that it was quite possible to avert the approaching catastrophe by wise and progressive reforms. He and the French Ambassador together succeeded in getting the amorous Sukhomlinoff dismissed, and, by a strong personal appeal to the Czar, he had three more of Goremykin's friends put out. Only one was left, but the aged foe of reform stood by his guns and proposed to fight the entire progressive group all by himself. The rancorous atmosphere of the Council chamber soon became unbearable; it was impossible to conceal the scandalous squabbles of the Ministry from the public, and, as Sazonov remarks, "the prestige of the central power rapidly declined." The Duma, the press, public organizations, and even the aristocratic Council of State began to distrust and assail the Council of Ministers.

It came finally to such a pass that on August 21, 1915, eight Ministers, nearly the entire Council, met at the house of Sazonov and drew up a letter to the Czar declaring that their "irreconcilable difference" with Goremykin was "inadmissible" and "fatal," and offering to resign. What was the result? In any other

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country, especially in the midst of a war, the discordant element would have been eliminated, politely or otherwise, and a new Premier would have been chosen to restore unity in the nation's councils. But not in Russia. Do not forget that Goremykin was a friend of Rasputin and the Czarina. So Goremykin himself was given the pleasant task of rebuking the eight for being so impertinent, and they were told to stick to their work and never, never, do such a thing again. But during the next year six of them, including Sazonov, were quietly dropped, "and only two, supposed to be less dangerous, remained in office till the downfall of the monarchy."

We are fortunate in having an account of Goremykin's visit with the Czarina after he had heard of the letter written by his foes, an account written by no less an authority than the Czarina herself. It is in one of her letters to the Czar, discovered at Ekaterinburg after the Bolshevik assassination of the Imperial family. In these leters, which were written in English, she refers to Goremykin as "the old man," and in her letter of August 23, 1915, she wrote:

"Well, Deary, I just had the old man for half an hour. He was so glad to get your message. . . . But shocked and horrified with the ministers' letter. . . . Finds no words for their behaviour and says how awfully difficult it is for him to preside knowing how they all go against him and his ideas, but he would never think of asking to leave, as he knows you would

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tell him if it were your wish. He has to see them tomorrow and will mention what he thinks about this letter, which is so false and untrue. . . . I begged him to be as energetic as possible."

Here we have the whole thing in a nutshell—Goremykin and a reactionary government rousing a national storm of criticism, but Nicholas, urged by the Czarina, refusing to accede an inch to the popular demand. Higher and higher rose the storm of criticism that assailed Goremykin, however, until even the palace party saw that he must go. In the late summer of 1915 the Czar took command of the army at the front, leaving the Czarina the dominating figure at the palace. While some were unkind enough to say that the Empress sent Nicholas to the front so that she could rule in Petrograd, Sazonov thinks rather that she was merely the tool of the unscrupulous people about her, "neurasthenics and intriguing adventurers," who wished to use her power for their own selfish ends. At any rate, we are told by this eye-witness that the Czar's absence was "a happy time for them of endless intrigues, solicitations and subterfuges." All requests were, as a rule, granted at once. Nicholas could refuse his wife nothing and she could refuse her friends nothing, so that there followed "the gradual decay of government and appointments to the chief posts in the Empire of men so incredibly unsuited that the public opinion grew exasperated. They discredited the principle of monarchy in the eyes of the Russian people and

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brought about the downfall of the dynasty to which Russia owed her greatness and glory."

Goremykin hung to his post by main strength through the fall and winter till February 2, 1916, when he was replaced by another man who at least made the people wish they had Goremykin back again. This precious appointee was Boris Vladimirovitch Stürmer. Who was he? That was what the French Ambassador was determined to find out, and after three busy days of investigation, he wrote in his diary that Stürmer "is 67, and worse than a mediocrity—third-rate intellect, mean spirit, low character, doubtful honesty, no experience, and no idea of state business. The most that can be said is that he has a rather pretty talent for cunning and flattery." How in the world did such a character ever get to be appointed President of the Council of Ministers? Because he was a friend of Rasputin, replies the Ambassador, and he remarks grimly that "all this means pleasant times ahead!"

Two days later came another shock. Stürmer appointed as Director of his Secretariat a man known to the Ambassador for several years as a "spy, sharper, swindler, cheat, forger, and rake in one." He, too, of course, was one of Rasputin's friends, and bore on his face "a look that was cunning, hard, cynical and sly." He was later arrested for taking bribes. Stürmer, it appears, had a "sharp and sickly gaze, searching yet furtive, the very image of ambitious and cunning hypocrisy." The Ambassador discovered that Stürmer and Rasputin met secretly every evening at the Fortress

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of Sts. Peter and Paul, in the room of the daughter of the governor of the fortress, and he wrote scathingly in his diary: "Of all the tragic spectacles which have left memories in this fearsome state prison, are any more sinister than the nocturnal gatherings of these two criminals who are ruining Russia?" Even the Czar, we learn, "loathed" Stürmer. The Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna declared to the Ambassador: "The Emperor loathes Stürmer; he knows he's incapable and dishonest; he sees through all his advances to the Empress and is uneasy about it. But he had not the courage to uphold Sazonov and he let Stürmer be thrust upon him." Unhappy Russia! Who shall we blame for the revolution, Lenin and Trotzky, working and scheming in Switzerland, or these sinister characters who were goading the nation on to despair and revolt?

Three months after Stürmer came into power, two representatives of the French government came to visit Russia, Viviani and Thomas. During a talk with Rodzianko, President of the Duma, M. Thomas remarked: "Russia must be very rich and sure of its strength to permit itself the luxury of such a government as yours, for the Prime Minister is a disaster and the Minister of War is a catastrophe." Stürmer lasted nearly ten months, when he was publicly charged in the Duma with sharing in the plunder of a blackmailing police spy and with betraying the secrets of the Allies to the enemy. Then he resigned.

A startling military flare-up that amazed the world

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occurred during the régime of Stürmer, but the old familiar causes of failure brought it to nothing. A critical hour in the war had come at the beginning of the summer of 1916. Italy was staggering under a terrific Austrian drive, the French army had been going through the awful mill at Verdun for months, Britain was ready to strike at the Somme, and Roumania was wavering between neutrality and joining the Allies. So an appeal was sent to Russia to strike a blow that would help all these causes at once. A Russian stroke, it was urged, would draw off Austrian divisions from the attack on Italy, draw off German divisions from Verdun and the Somme, and decide Roumania to line up with the Allied Powers. Accordingly, to use the vivid words of Falkenhayn, the German Chief of Staff, "the blow fell like a bolt from the blue in Galicia on the 4th of June." The reason it was like a bolt from the blue was because the Germans supposed the Russian army was completely done for. Never for a moment did they think that the huge Russian giant, pounded into insensibility in 1915, could deliver a first-class blow in 1916. And it was this error that made the blow a success. Facing the southern half of the Russian battle-front was a thin line of second-class Austro-Hungarian divisions, lulled into negligence by their idea that Ivan was down and out. The trenches were only half-manned and half-fortified. Back of the lines the officers were quartered in delightful little cottages nestling prettily among the trees.

Suddenly on June 4 a Russian bombardment burst

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over the Austrian lines, and before the Austrian officers could bring up reserves or take any counter-measures, the husky Russians were swarming over their defenses. As Falkenhayn put it, "After a relatively short artillery preparation, they had got up from their trenches and simply marched forward." The Austrians were absolutely taken by surprise and either surrendered by thousands or took to their heels en masse and made the whole battle-front look like a gigantic foot-race. As Falkenhayn himself admits, it resulted in "the loss by our allies of far more than 200,000 men in three days." When we remember that the Germans lost only 278,000 at Verdun in five months, Falkenhayn's disgust may be imagined.

On, on, went the great Slav steam-roller, flattening out the Austrian lines and penetrating twenty, fifty, seventy and in some places a hundred miles into the enemy front. On it went through June, through July, August and September. By October 7th the Russians had taken 430,000 prisoners, 650 guns, and 2,700 machine guns. The world was electrified. The name of Brusilov, who commanded the great push, was trumpeted around the globe in dispatches and flaring headlines. Italy, facing defeat by Austria in May, felt encouraged enough to take on another foe and declared war on Germany in August. Roumania, right next door to the Brusilov advance, sagely decided that Russia had proved its ability to fight on successfully to victory, so it definitely joined the Allies and sent an army into Hungary, counting on strong Russian coöperation.

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What the world did not know was that the Russian effort was done. Instead of a beginning, it was the end. Instead of aiding the Roumanians, they were left to the mercy of a powerful German army which descended upon them like a thunderbolt, occupied nearly all Roumania, and took over the rich Roumanian oil-fields for the benefit of the Kaiser's army, so that Roumania's declaration of war gave Germany a much-needed supply of petroleum, to say nothing of wheat and other necessities. Italy's declaration of war on Germany, too, gave the Kaiser the right to stiffen the Austrian front with German divisions; otherwise it might not have stood the Italian attacks.

Just at the time when Roumania and Italy made their declarations of war, Brusilov's offensive died down for lack of ammunition. As the Russian General Gourko says, it was due to "that misfortune that followed us from the very outset, shortage in ammunition for the artillery, and particularly for the heavy guns." This knocked out completely the plans of those who hoped to have a converging movement of Italy, Russia and Roumania upon Austria in the last half of 1916 to put her out of the war and pave the way for the defeat of Germany in 1917. And the failure was due, as General Gourko says, to the mere lack of ammunition. As we run our glance back over the history of the war, it seems like a vista of "might-have-beens," a vista of lost chances, a vista of missed opportunities, a vista of inviting doorways opened to those who were too blind to see them.

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In November Stürmer was lopped off. But the disease was too deep to be cured by this one amputation. Others were left. It would weary the reader to enumerate them, but no one could ignore the scene in the Duma when Trepov, Stürmer's successor, faced the deputies for the first time. "Down with Protopopov! Down with Protopopov!" they shouted at the top of their lungs until Trepov had to leave the tribune three times before he was allowed to speak. The shouting of these explosive syllables by the entire Duma must have resounded through the building like the pop-pop of machine guns. In the evening a fiery speech was made, not by radicals, not by socialists, but by two leaders of the Right, who fulminated against the "occult forces which are dishonoring and ruining Russia," and said flatly that "it only requires the recommendation of Rasputin to raise the most abject creature to the highest offices."

Who was Protopopov? Well, by this time it is hardly necessary to say that he was another dear friend of Rasputin and the Czarina. He was "half-insane," says Foreign Minister Sazonov, and the French Ambassador makes the same diagnosis. One secret of his influence over the Empress, it is said, was his spiritualistic séances at the palace, where he called up the spirits of departed royal ancestors, who invariably confirmed Protopopov's policies. Protopopov was made Minister of the Interior in September, 1915, "another candidate selected by these powers of darkness," remarks Sazonov in his thoughtful volume on "Fateful Years."

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We happen to have preserved for us the Czarina's letters to the Czar, urging him to make Protopopov Minister of the Interior: "Gregory [Rasputin] begs you earnestly to name Protopopov." Then after the appointment: "God bless your new choice of Protopopov—our Friend [Rasputin] says you have done a very wise act in naming him." Once appointed, the Czarina kept urging Nicholas to give him more and more power: "Would it not be wiser to give over all that question about food and fuel to the Minister of the Interior? . . . Our Friend said it was absolutely necessary. . . . So I spoke to Stürmer yesterday and they both believe in our Friend's wonderful God-sent wisdom."

We get a new light on "Our Friend's God-sent wisdom" when we turn to the French Ambassador's diary for December 27, 1916, and find a copy of a note he sent to Aristide Briand in which he speaks of Stürmer and Protopopov as being "notoriously compromised in Germany's favor," and says that Nicholas "allows a hot-bed of Teutonic intrigues to exist in his own palace." It must not be hastily inferred from this that the French Ambassador thought the Empress pro-German. In another place he clearly denies any such idea, and, indeed, no one can read her letters and think it. But he did believe she was surrounded by designing and intriguing people who were either pro-German or were being used by German influences. The rumor that the Empress was pro-German is said to have been started by the German propaganda depart-

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ment to help bring on the revolution, and it was widely believed. Instead, it now turns out that she was one of the few people in the Court circle who were anti-German. Such is the irony of circumstance.

So successful was the half-crazy Protopopov in conjuring up royal ancestors that he clung to power right up to the revolution, in March, 1917. Many thought that when Rasputin was killed, on December 30, 1916, Protopopov would lose his power, but he was sane enough to cleverly call up Rasputin's spirit, and the Czarina, of course, would never hear of losing one who could conjure up "Our Friend" and restore his inspiring influence and "God-sent wisdom" to the palace circle. So the mad Minister kept his place and power and was one of the shining justifications of the revolution.

Where others had scourged Russia with whips, he scourged her with scorpions. Trepov soon gave up his post as impossible and Protopopov was supreme. The Emperor was away, at the front, the Empress was hypnotized by his séances, and he did as he pleased. There can be no doubt, says the Petrograd correspondent of the London *Daily Telegraph,* that Protopopov "was responsible for every one of the lunatic and fatal measures adopted in Russia's domestic affairs." Members of the aristocratic Council of the Empire who dared to say they favored a Cabinet "enjoying the confidence of the public" were promptly kicked out and subservient lackeys of autocracy put in their places. Political arrests were made every day.

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The eleven workmen's representatives on the Central War Industries Committee were clapped into jail, although they were working might and main to prevent strikes in the munition factories. All this led people to believe that Protopopov was trying to goad the country into a revolt so that he could have the glory of stamping it out.

A food shortage threatened Petrograd while plentiful supplies were rotting elsewhere. Hungry groups roamed about the streets of the capital while the half-insane Minister increased the number of police to 28,000 and took large numbers of machine guns, sent by England and sorely needed at the front, and mounted them on the roofs where they could sweep the streets. He crowded the city's barracks with no less than 160,000 soldiers. It is a strange, strange picture as we view it at this distance of the years, but try to imagine the feelings of those unhappy people, rich and poor, who saw the storm clouds gathering blacker and blacker and heard the rumblings of thunder growing louder and louder, nearer and nearer.

The dinner parties of the rich were gloomy affairs. Attempts at light conversation died away into silence and the guests sat abstracted, distracted, wondering what fate the next day might bring. The dinners of the poor were non-existent, like their breakfasts and their suppers. Poor people in the streets accosted the soldiers and begged them not to shoot them when the day came they were all looking for. "You won't shoot us, will you?" they pleaded. "We only want bread."

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"No, we won't shoot you, brothers," replied the troops. What a pitiful pass these simple colloquies reveal. Such was the state to which the madman had brought his country. Was ever anything like it in the history of our mad world? The Emperor issued a rescript declaring that all Russians were turning their thoughts solely to the army, and "the Russian people, supporting the burden of war with self-denial, will accomplish their duty to the end, not stopping at any sacrifice."

As the whole Empire was seething with condemnation of the Czar's Ministers and Court, who were blamed for the bloodiest defeats Russia had ever known, it can be easily seen that this rescript did not help matters much. Not while Protopopov was jailing people right and left for merely saying sane things in the midst of all this insanity, and not while they saw the roofs bristling with machine guns ready to mow people down for the crime of being hungry.

Hunger, it is said, sharpens the mind, so that the hungry man sees things that the well-fed never notice. So it happened on Monday, March 12, 1917, that hungry people peering at the loaves in the bakery windows noticed that the streets were paved with stones of just the right size to fit the hand. It took but a moment to carry the idea to its logical conclusion, the crash of glass brought the troops on the scene, the colloquies on the streets were remembered, the 160,000 armed soldiers became 160,000 armed sympathizers with the people, and the revolution was as

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good as done. It only needed to work out the details, to descend from a Duma government to a Bolshevik government, and Putilov's prediction worked out like a mathematical formula. Protopopov's machine guns remained as harmless as pea-shooters. Toward midnight a haggard man approached one of the Duma guards. "Take me to the Committee of the Duma," he said. "I surrender voluntarily, for I seek only the welfare of our country. My name is Protopopov."

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CHAPTER XXIV

SHADOWY FIGURE OF THE CZAR

THE central figure of this darkening drama was of course Nicholas II, yet it is a strange fact that amid all the many-colored characters that flitted across the stage, his was the most shadowy and elusive. People who went to interview him tell us that he seemed to withdraw into himself until an invisible veil formed between them and the monarch appeared to be far away, beyond the reach of the interviewer who was really face to face with him. Pierre Gilliard, tutor of the Czarevitch, who lived in the Imperial household and went with the family to Siberia, tells us that the Czar was extremely shy and retiring by nature. M. Gilliard gives a remarkably intimate picture of the life at the palace in his "Thirteen Years at the Russian Court." Nicholas is, of course, mentioned continuously in its pages, yet one lays the book down without knowing much more about him than when the volume was picked up.

Everyone knows people who have the reputation of being cold and aloof simply because they are too shy to come out of themselves or to warm up to any advances. Nicholas apparently was one of this sort. In fact, M. Gilliard says that "he belonged to the

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category of human beings who are always hesitating because they are too diffident, and are ever slow to impose their will on others because they are too gentle and sensitive. He had little faith in himself."

A vivid illumination of this fact appeared when the Emperor took the Czarevitch with him to headquarters. The tutor protested. It would be bad for the boy's health, he said. True, admitted the Emperor and Empress, but life at headquarters would train him in self-reliance and self-confidence so that he would not be afflicted all his life with shyness, like his father. The boy's ill-health was their constant anxiety, yet they put that second to their fear that he might become another timid, distant, aloof man like Nicholas. Here we have one secret of the Czar's tragic failure. He was no ogre, no monstrous autocrat whose excesses of tyranny drove his subjects to rebellion, but his shyness, his timidity, produced the same result. His lack of faith in himself made him give tyrannical power to others, to unworthy people whose incompetence and corruption were equal to the tyranny of a Nero.

The Czar's first judgments were remarkably right, we are assured by those who knew him well, but the pity of it was that he did not go ahead and act on them. He mistrusted himself, and sought the advice of others. Hence he was the easy prey of intriguers and designing people, often acting through the Empress. The Empress thought she was helping him. She knew his irresolute character, and decided that her mission in life was to make up his mind for him, and hold him

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to it. Her letters to him frequently have passages like this one:

"Ah, my Love, when at last will you thump with your hand upon the table and scream at Dzhunkovsky and others when they act wrongly—one does not fear you—and one must—they must be frightened of you, otherwise all sit upon us, and its enough Deary—dont let me speak in vain. . . . Oh, my Boy, make one tremble before you—to love you is not enough, one must be afraid of hurting, displeasing you. You are always too kind and all profit. It cannot go on like that Dearie, beleive me once, its honest truth I speak. All, who really love you, long that you should be more decided and show your displeasure stronger, be more severe—things cant go well so. If your Ministers feared you all would be better. The old man, Goremykin, also finds you ought to be more sure of yourself and energetically speak, and show more strongly when you are displeased."

This was at the time when the really able and progressive Ministers were trying to pry the "old man" out of the cabinet, and it was the Empress and her incessant urgings that made Nicholas keep Goremykin in and dismiss the men whose wise advice of reform might have saved his throne. A little later, it was his own judgment to oust Protopopov, and, in fact, he had promised it. Then the Empress and Protopopov descended like a storm upon headquarters and the imperial weather-vein whipped around to the new wind.

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We have here probably the only autocrat in history who caused a revolution by being too gentle. Some think that he personally disliked Rasputin, but tolerated him because the Empress believed he saved their boy's life. Robert Wilton, Petrograd correspondent of the London *Times,* reports the Czar as saying helplessly to an old General who had ventured to bring up the Rasputin question: "I prefer five Rasputins to one hysterical woman!"

The French Ambassador felt it necessary to warn his government in December, 1916, that while the Czar was determined to continue the war, his irresolution and weak will might bring all his loyalty to nothing. Nicholas was managed by his wife, his wife was managed by Rasputin, and Rasputin by a gang of self-seekers, grafters and traitors. Such is the picture we get from responsible people who were on the spot. And it was through two qualities of the very highest kind that the unfortunate man was manipulated, led about, and hurried to the brink—his love of God and his love for his son. "We have been placed by God on a throne," the Czarina wrote to him on December 14, 1916, "and we must keep it firm and give it over to our son untouched—if you will keep that in mind you will remember to be the Sovereign—and how much easier for an autocratic sovereign than one who has sworn to the Constitution. Beloved one, listen to me, yes, you know yr. old true Girly. 'Do not fear' the old woman said, and therefore I write without fear to my agoo wee one." She continually refers to Rasputin in

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her letters as a "man of God's" and "our Friend" and reminds Nicholas that "Our Friend leads through God," and "no one who goes against God can prosper." "We must give a strong country to Baby, and dare not be weak for his sake. . . . Be firm, I am your wall, am behind you and wont give way," she assures him. Her continual urgings to concede nothing to the Duma, or the Duma leaders, would appear at least to indicate that Nicholas favored making such concessions, and, if left alone, he might have saved Russia from Bolshevism.

The verdict of those who aver that Nicholas was sound in his own judgments is strongly confirmed by his remark, when the Kaiser declared war, that "In starting this war the Emperor William has dealt a terrible blow to the monarchical principle," a prophecy whose truth can be attested by a distinguished resident of Doorn. Again, when Nicholas, in exile in Siberia, heard of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, he exclaimed: "It is such a disgrace for Russia, and amounts to suicide. I should never have thought the Emperor William and the German Government could stoop to shake hands with those miserable traitors. But I'm sure they will get no good from it; it wont save them from ruin!" He made this remark on March 19, 1918. The next morning but one the great German drive on the western front was launched, and his prophecy seemed fantastically false. Eight months later, on November 11, it came precisely true.

If this son of Peter the Great had only had Peter's

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firmness in holding to his own judgments, the history of his country might have been a different story. Nicholas realized that in Petrograd he was surrounded by plotters and conspirators and he welcomed the purer and more invigorating air of the army headquarters. "You have no idea how depressing it is to be away from the front," he said to his son's tutor on July 16, 1915, on a visit to the palace at Tsarskoe-Selo. "Here it seems as if everything saps energy and enfeebles resolution. . . . Folk here care nothing except for intrigues and cabals, and regard low personal interests only. Out at the front, men fight and die for their country. At the front there is only one thought—the determination to conquer. All else is forgotten. . . . I can never be in too much of a hurry to be with my troops."

But while he was at the front, the intrigues went on at the palace, Rasputin's advice was supreme, and Nicholas signed practically every paper sent to him by the Empress. Such was the disastrous fruit of a feeble will.

Then, too, there was another element that paralyzed what little resolution the Czar had. He was obsessed with the idea that nothing he could do would succeed. Bad luck dogged his steps, he firmly believed, and every effort he made would fail. Peasants in whispers discussed this curse that rested on the Little Father and made everything he did go wrong. The French Ambassador was told about it in hushed tones by one of his secret informers whom he employed to bring

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him information about what was said and done in the immediate entourage of the sovereigns. The Ambassador, Maurice Paleologue, gives a vivid account of it in his invaluable Memoirs.

Lowering his voice, as if telling some terrible secret, the informer fixed the Ambassador with his sharp, yellow eyes, glowing with dull flames from time to time, and related the incredible list of accidents, mistakes, reverses and disasters which had marked the Czar's reign. First was the terrible tragedy when two thousand peasants were crushed to death in a stampede at the coronation in the meadows near Moscow. Then only a few weeks later the Czar saw a steamer go down before his eyes with three hundred souls on the Dnieper. A few weeks more and he saw his favorite Minister, Lobanov, die suddenly on his train. Longing for a son to inherit his crown, he had four daughters, and when finally a son was born, the child was found to have an incurable disease that might end his life at any time. His wife, too, was a neurotic who filled the palace with an atmosphere of endless unrest and worry.

Furthermore, longing for peace, he found himself dragged by schemers into war with Japan, his armies beaten in Manchuria, his fleets sunk in the China seas. Then a storm of revolution swept across Russia, the informer went on, risings and massacres followed each other in Warsaw, the Caucasus, Odessa, Kiev, Vologda, Moscow, the Baltic provinces, Kharkov, St. Petersburg and Kronstadt. Political assassinations fol-

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lowed, climaxing when Premier Stolypin, who was hailed as Russia's savior, fell by an assassin's bullet right in front of the Czar's box in the theater at Kiev. So, said the informer, his tawny eyes gleaming and glowing, "your Excellency must admit that the Czar is doomed to misfortune." And we enlightened souls who scoff at superstition must admit, as we contemplate the Czar's end, that we have here something to explain!

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CHAPTER XXV

THE CZARINA AND RASPUTIN

RUSSIA'S disastrous blunders have now been traced to the Generals and Ministers who committed them, then to the Czar who appointed such incompetent and unworthy men, and next we must proceed to the Empress who guided the hand of the Emperor.

Alexandra Feodorovna was German by birth, English by education, training, tastes and sympathies, and Russian at last in the deep, religious mysticism of the Slav soul. She was born in 1872, the daughter of a Grand Duke of Hesse, and Princess Alice, daughter of Queen Victoria. When she was six her mother died and thereafter she lived mostly at the British Court. She grew up virtually an English girl in appearance, habits, mental and moral nature, and personal manner of life. The family life at Tsarskoe-Selo was conducted like an English home, the Empress spoke English, and her letters to Nicholas were written in English. She disliked Germany, and especially Prussia, even before the war, and had a personal distaste for William, whom she held entirely responsible for the conflict.

She was tall and blond, with a cold and formal type of beauty, and even in her teens she was supposed to be the destined bride of Nicholas. The betrothal, how-

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ever, did not come until she was 22, in 1894, and almost immediately after it she hurried to the death bed of Alexander III and followed his coffin to St. Petersburg. By some strange omen, this was her first public appearance in her new country, and the peasant women crossed themselves and murmured: "She comes to us behind a coffin. She brings misfortune!" Soon afterward came the wedding and the coronation with its frightful tragedy. The French government added another omen by presenting her with a very handsome piece of tapestry containing a portrait of Marie Antoinette, who was guillotined in the French Revolution. This hung on the wall of the Czarina's apartment, and her eye may have rested upon it as she left the palace for the last time, never to return.

After four daughters, came the little Czarevitch, whose ill-health was to bring Rasputin to the palace and give him a hold that never broke until it had broken the monarchy past all repair. The boy's ailment was hemophilia, or internal bleeding, a strange hereditary disease which affects only males, but is transmitted only by females. Thus the Empress did not have it, but transmitted it from her male ancestors to her son. The Czarevitch had it, but would not have transmitted it to his sons; hence it would not have continued to afflict the Russian imperial line.

Let us look for a moment at one attack through the eyes of the boy's tutor, M. Gilliard. One day little Alexis was standing on a chair in the schoolroom when he slipped and fell, striking his right knee against a

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piece of furniture. The ordinary boy would have had only a bruise, a black and blue spot. But with little Alexis the blow broke the over-tender blood vessels and caused internal bleeding. The following day he could not walk. The day after, his leg was badly swollen from the knee down; the skin was distended and hard; the blood pressed on the nerves of the leg and caused shooting pains, growing worse every hour. Perhaps M. Gilliard is the only one now alive who witnessed one of these attacks.

The distracted father and mother hovered over their suffering boy in an agony of anxiety. Every little while one of his sisters would tiptoe in and kiss him tenderly, while he opened his eyes for a moment in a glance eloquent of suffering. Worse and worse grew the swelling, worse and worse the pain, as the little lad groaned piteously, his head resting on his mother's arm, his face deathly white. Between groans he murmured the one word, "Mummy!" "His mother kissed him on the hair, forehead and eyes," says M. Gilliard, "as if the touch of her lips could have relieved his pain and restored some of the life which was leaving him."

Then this keen observer comes to the heart of it all, and we see how the charlatan Rasputin gained his hold over the distracted Czarina through her love for her son. He exclaims: "Think of the tortures of that mother, an impotent witness of her son's martyrdom in those hours of mortal anguish—a mother who knew that she herself was the cause of his sufferings, that she had transmitted to him the terrible disease against

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which human science was powerless! Now I understood the secret tragedy of her life! How easy it was to reconstruct the stages of that long Calvary!"

The boy recovered, regained his health, and again seemed a normal, healthy child, full of fun and spirits. But again some fall would start another internal hemorrhage, and all the agony and suffering would return. Each time his life was in peril. And it was in the midst of these tortures of the Czarina's mother-love that the wretched impostor Rasputin was brought to the palace, and said, "Believe in the power of my prayers, believe in my help, and your son will live!" The response of the distracted Empress was something pitiful. The bird fascinated by the serpent is no more helpless than was the poor Czarina, hypnotized by the brilliant and penetrating gray eyes of the so-called monk whose drunken debaucheries scandalized all Russia.

At first he said: "Believe in my prayers, and your son will live." But very soon it was: "If I go away, your son will die!" And with this threat hanging like a sword over the little Alexis, he dictated who should be appointed to office or dismissed from office, what should be done or not done, until he was really the supreme power behind the throne. By a sardonic whim of fate, remarks the observant tutor of Alexis, "this man's evil influence was one of the principal causes of the death of those who thought him their saviour," and it was "in her desire to save her husband and son, whom she loved more than life itself," that the

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Empress "forged with her own hands the instrument of their undoing."

The weird drama of Russia's descent into the pit of course had to have some diabolical figure like this. Shakespeare would have put him in. Victor-Hugo would never have left him out. He would have stalked darkly through the tragedy if Dumas had written it. Without him, it would have lacked something, like the inferno without Satan. People who met him made this comparison at once. "During the few moments in which our looks met, I had a distinct impression that I was in the presence of a sinister and evil being," testifies the tutor of little Alexis.

Rasputin was tall and thin, with long hair and beard, and wore a blue silk smock with baggy black velvet trousers tucked into high patent leather boots—a dandy of the peasant type. What arrested attention, however, was his sharp eyes of gray-blue, shooting their piercing glances from under heavy, bushy eyebrows. His eyes had a strange, deep gleam that was magnetic and fascinating, say those who met him. They seemed to penetrate and yet caress, to be cunning, straightforward, near and aloof all at the same time. His brow, tall and broad, and his nose, large and aquiline, added strength to his look.

His face reminded Robert Wilton, the Petrograd correspondent of the London *Times*, of Repin's celebrated painting of Russia's mad, vicious, bloodthirsty genius, Ivan the Terrible, who exterminated the flower of the aristocracy between orgies of torture and

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paroxysms of prayer. No wonder that Prince Eugene Trubetskoy declared before the Great Congress of the Church at Moscow: "In the latter years of Nicholas II Russia was like some dark, hellish kingdom." That was when the staretz was in command. Rasputin was personally unclean. "I find him disgusting," said Countess B—— to the French Ambassador. "He has dirty hands, black nails, and an unkempt beard. Horrors!" "Yet," she added, "I'll admit he amuses me all the same. He has extraordinary *verve* and imagination. At times he is actually eloquent. Some days he has a very original and arresting way of speaking. He is familiar, mocking, violent, merry, ridiculous and poetical by turns. And with all this not a trace of pose! On the contrary, the most unexampled effrontery and the most staggering cynicism."

A little town named Pokrovskoie in western Siberia had the honor of bringing Rasputin into an unsuspecting world in the year of our Lord 1871. Rasputin was a nickname meaning "dirty dog," "woman-chaser" or "debauchee," fastened on him by his companions, and it seems to have stuck. His real name, Grigory, was used by the Empress, softened to Grishka, and shortened in her letters to "Gr." He was celebrated for his havoc among the fair sex even in his early days, it appears, and when he fell under religious influences which awakened his strong mystical nature, he joined a strange sect called the Khlisty, whose ritual rivaled the most licentious dances of the lowest savage tribes. The devotees were accustomed to gather at night and

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amid flaring torches danced, sang, yelled, circling faster and faster under the whip of the leader, until the wild scene ended in an orgy of fleshly sensuality like a gathering of dogs or swine.

Rasputin's talents shone brilliantly in this kind of religion, and he soon became celebrated as a "holy man." Through towns and villages he ranged, preaching, working miraculous cures, mumbling incantations, and performing generally like the witch-doctor, medicine-man, and fakir who is a common character among all backward and superstitious peoples. The villagers would flop down on their knees when he went by, kissing his dirty hands or garments and hailing him as "Our Christ, Our Saviour!" It is hardly necessary to add that he accepted the adoration, held his hands forth in benediction, and promised everything imaginable.

His line of theology is worth notice. Its big point was repentance. "Repent, and ye shall be clean." The deeper and oftener the repentances, the higher the spiritual bliss. But it is clear as daylight that there can be no repentance without sins to repent of. We must sin, then, in order to repent and receive the blessing. Temptation is sent by heaven for this purpose, argued the "holy man," and to resist it is to resist God! It would be incredible if it were not attested by everyone who has taken the trouble to trace his history. Moreover, it seems to have produced so many converts that the "holy man's" life would not have been worth a kopeck in St. Petersburg if the outraged husbands

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had not been kept in terror of the secret police, who guarded the precious libertine as if his life, and not his death, were what Russia needed for her salvation.

The fame of this religious mountebank spread far and wide until it reached the Court, and in the summer of 1907 he was presented to the Emperor and Empress by the Grand Duchesses Anastasia and Militza, daughters of the King of Montenegro and wives of the Russian Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaievitch and his brother Grand Duke Peter, uncles of the Czar.

The deeply mystical religious minds of the Emperor and Empress made them ready victims to the hypnotizing gaze of those magnetic blue-gray eyes of the miracle man. Repeatedly the monk seemed to cure the little Alexis when the doctors had failed, until finally it reached the point where Rasputin got the credit anyway, even if the doctors cured him. Once, for example, the poor boy nearly died of nose-bleed, until the doctors succeeded in cauterizing the broken blood-vessel and stopping it. The Czarina, overjoyed, gave all the credit to Rasputin's prayers! Friends who tried to disillusion the royal dupes got only an icy reception. The sister of the Empress was told peremptorily never to mention the subject again.

The influence of the impostor, meanwhile, rose to dizzy heights as he "prayed" over all kinds of offices and appointments in Church and State and assured the rulers it was God's will that this or that man should be appointed or dismissed. His house was besieged by job-hunters of every sort, generals, officials, bishops,

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Cabinet Ministers, maids of honor and grand dames of society. All wished to figure in his "prayers," as they could see that his petitions were answered, if others were not. This situation soon got beyond the point of mere grotesquerie. High positions in the church and state soon began to fill with characters of the sort who would bow the knee to an infamous character like Rasputin. Automatically, at a crisis when Russia needed her best, her worst came into power.

Then Rasputin took to issuing orders. Surrounded by a group of designing and intriguing people, traitors, shady speculators and what-not, all anxious and greedy to use the "holy man," he was induced to send coarse notes of command to officials, banks, business houses, ordering them to do this or that. Nothing was too preposterous. Nobody dared disobey. We have the word of the French Ambassador that he even sent notes direct to the Empress: "Here! Get that done for me!" And at once she would give the order, little thinking she was working for a gang of traitors and German agents behind Rasputin.

In peace time all this would be simply priceless material for comic opera. In war, however, it meant that brave men must starve, freeze, be blown to fragments, because fools and knaves were shoved into places of power by the dirty hands of this wretched debauchee. It would be a huge mistake to think that the Russian people were blind to all this. Whisperings ran like the wind from west to east and from north to south all over the great empire, telling of the mad

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reign of chicanery at the court. The great retreat of 1915 filled every town and village with refugees and wounded, full of wild tales of incompetence at the front, shortage of guns, rifles, ammunition, clothing, everything necessary for war, and it took no special keenness of eye to trace the whole great failure back to the tricksters and traitors who pulled the strings behind Rasputin, Nicholas and Alexandra. A clumsy attempt to stop gossip was made by Rasputin's official friends, who ordered the press not to print his name, but of course it was the easiest thing in the world to print all the gossip just the same under a thin veil of innuendo that really gave added tang to the stories.

As defeat followed defeat, and slaughter followed slaughter, the righteous rage of the whole people rose higher and higher. No accurate record of army losses seems to have been kept, or even attempted, but in December, 1916, at about the end of Russia's serious effort, General Gourko figured that the total losses up to that time in killed, wounded, prisoners, and missing were from four to four and one-half million. Back of every one of these victims were relatives and friends, extending like a network throughout Russia, who were beginning to think that someone was to blame for the loss of these sons, brothers, fathers, and who were beginning to turn a dreadful gaze of accusation at the imperial court and the black spider spinning there his web of poisonous intrigue.

It is not certain that Rasputin knew he was being used by the German agents in Petrograd. His record

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is certainly black enough without adding anything not his by rights. "When sober, Rasputin said very little," testified A. N. Khvostov, Minister of the Interior, before the Duma. "His friends knew this, and therefore took him to a restaurant, gave him a bottle of madeira, and then he told them what had happened at Tsarskoe." On this particular occasion he told them the Czar was complaining because the army lacked boots and guns, and would not be able to advance for two months—extremely valuable news for the enemy. The Czarina's letters, as noted in the valuable volume of "Documents of Russian History," contain passages here and there betraying the fact that she told the most secret military plans to Rasputin—of course for his prayers for heavenly guidance—and it requires little imagination to picture him shouting them all out in his drunken sprees in the restaurants of Petrograd. Thus on November 16, 1915, the Czarina wrote to Nicholas that she had received his "secret marche-route," and "I won't say a word about it except to our Friend to guard you everywhere." Again on September 29, 1916, she wrote the Emperor: "I begged our Friend to particularly pray for the success of our new plans and he does so, and hopes God will bless them." A week later she wrote she had told Rasputin "about the new orders you gave to Brusilov," and added: "He won't mention it to a soul, but I had to ask his blessing for your decision." It really seems as if nothing were left undone to ensure Russian defeat and disaster.

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Clearly this sort of thing could not go on. In a land of 165,000,000 people, someone would be found to stop it. But right here we meet another significant fact. It was no long-haired, bewhiskered Russian anarchist who sent Rasputin to his doom. His assassins did not come from the dregs of society, from the starving workers, from the maimed fighters, or even from the pale intellectuals. The national rage had risen higher than that, and infected everyone, from the lowest to the loftiest. His three executioners were Prince Felix Yussupov, who married a niece of the Czar in 1914, the Grand Duke Dmitri (son of the Czar's uncle, the Grand Duke Paul), and Purishkevitch, leader of the Extreme Right, or aristocratic party, in the Duma. Purishkevitch had electrified the Duma with an impassioned speech against Rasputin just four weeks before, on December 2nd. His own eloquence seemingly convinced him that deeds, not words, were needed.

The French Ambassador gives us the story. Rasputin was induced to come to the Yussupov palace by the only bait that was sure to bring him, the prospect of meeting a pretty woman. But the woman he met was the dark and fateful angel whose busy shears snap the thread of life. Prince Yussupov, who went to bring him, greeted him with a resounding kiss, and the monk exclaimed, "Heavens! What a kiss, boy! I hope it isn't the kiss of Judas! . . . Come, let's go!" As Rasputin was coming expressly to meet the Prince's pretty young wife, it is evident that there was more

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than one Judas in the party. The Princess was a thousand miles away, in the Crimea, but the "holy man" didn't know that.

Next to women, he loved wine, and when they reached the palace, about midnight, the Prince said his wife was detained by company, and took Rasputin to a small reception room, where, on a table, were cakes and wine glasses containing enough cyanide of potassium to kill twenty men. But the monk, for once, was not thirsty. He declined to eat or drink. For an hour the Prince led him on to talk of occultism and spiritism till at last his own eloquence dried his throat and he tossed off three glasses of the wine. But with no effect! It might as well have been water! Totally unnerved, the Prince excused himself and ran upstairs to his companions. "The beast will escape us!" he exclaimed, and snatching a revolver, he rushed back and fired two shots point blank into the monk's body while he was looking at a crucifix. Rasputin fell, and the Prince examined his pulse and eye and could find no trace of life. "He is dead," he reported to his companions, and they went to make arrangements to dispose of the body.

Then the Prince returned, and Rasputin, full of cyanide and bullets, rose to his feet, clapped the Prince on the shoulder, tore off his epaulette, and said: "You wretch! You'll be hung tomorrow! I'm going to tell the Empress everything!" Aghast, the Prince rushed from the room to his friends, cried, "He's still alive! He spoke to me!" and fell on a sofa in a faint.

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Purishkevitch then seized the revolver, rushed downstairs and found the incredible monk had gone out the door to the garden, and was dragging himself away across the snow! Purishkevitch fired one shot into his neck and another into his body, Prince Yussupov, now half crazy, came rushing out with a great brass candlestick and brought it down on the victim's skull, and at last the reluctant soul went to meet its Maker. The conspirators then hastily tied the body to weights and threw it into the river, but even the weights refused to keep him company and he rose again to the sight of the city he had cursed.

The body was washed, embalmed, and clothed in new garments by order of the Empress, who came to pray over it, covered it with flowers, ikons, and tears, and had it buried in the palace grounds at Tsarskoe-Selo. In the hand of the dead mountebank was placed a letter from the Empress, reading: "My dear martyr, give me thy blessing, that it may follow me always on the sad and dreary path I have yet to traverse here below. And remember us from on high in your holy prayers!" The tutor of Alexis declares he shall never forget what he felt when he saw the Czarina again. "Her agonized features betrayed how terribly she was suffering. Her grief was inconsolable. Her idol had been shattered. He who alone could save her son had been slain. Now that he had gone, any misfortune, any catastrophe, was possible." From this time on, the attitude of the imperial family was one of waiting for the disaster.

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CHAPTER XXVI

THE CROWNING BLUNDER

ONLY ten weeks they had to wait. The removal of Rasputin, instead of relieving the tension, seemed to bring it to a head. The peasants suddenly remembered that Rasputin was a peasant too, and that he had been murdered by the aristocrats. The imperial relatives of the Czar held secret meetings, talked of a palace revolution to depose Nicholas and Alexandra and crown a new Czar, perhaps Dmitri, one of Rasputin's executioners. But they could not agree on anything. The Duma assembled and resumed its attacks on the half-mad Protopopov, Minister of the Interior, who controlled the police, the food-supply, and everything that touched the people most vitally. It might almost be said that the revolution, when it came, was a revolt against Protopopov, and many times during those critical ten weeks, Nicholas was begged and implored to dismiss him and appoint someone who would seize the food situation with a firm and able hand, bring order out of disorder, feed the starving workers of Petrograd, and still the rising spirit of revolt.

But the Czar who had made error after error could scarcely be expected to avoid making the final blunder at the eleventh hour. One of the Czar's ministers

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pleaded with him with clenched hands to break with Protopopov, only to be told calmly that "the situation is not as tragic as all that, and everything will come right." Prince Nicholas Golitzin, too, assured the Czar that his life was in danger, and that army regiments were talking of proclaiming a new Emperor. To which Nicholas merely replied: "The Empress and I know that we are in God's hands. His will be done!"

It is no reply to say that anybody can see mistakes after it is too late. Plenty of people saw the tragic errors of Russia's rulers before it was too late. They made their voices heard in the Duma, in the press, in personal appeals to the Czar, everywhere, anywhere, all without the slightest effect. Worse and worse grew the blunders, higher and higher rose the toll of Russia's bravest sons, until the national soul was torn, seared, embittered to the point where no merely sane revolution was enough. The parliament of the people was the Duma, and it tried to ride the storm, led first by Milyukov, then by Kerensky. But no parliamentary government would do.

The Russian peasant is normally the gentlest and kindest being in the world, but when his wrath is roused he tears his foe to pieces with incredible cruelty and savagery. In this case nothing had been omitted, during these long years of agony, that would fire his heart with hatred and stir it to revenge. So while the Duma was sitting in the Tauride Palace, planning an orderly constitutional government, in the same building was gathered the "Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers'

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Deputies" which began to issue proclamations addressed to the wrath, the bitterness, the rage, of the Russian soul. Which would win? Knowing what we do now, there could be but one answer. And one man, named Lenin, in Switzerland, had seen it all along, and was coming across Germany, as fast as steam could bring him, speeded by the German government, to complete the collapse and ruin of the Russian giant.

The Soviet program, in a word, is that the workers shall control everything. This was interpreted at once to mean that the soldiers and workers were entitled to take anything they liked, and it would require volumes to tell of the anarchy, robberies, murders, and violence of every kind that turned Russia into a land of nightmare, with no one to restore any sort of law or order. "There is destruction in the cities and in the villages, destruction of stores and landlords' warehouses. Arson, looting, and violence is everywhere," said the Petrograd *Isvestia* of October 16, 1917, as quoted in "Documents of Russian History." And it went on: "There is now just as great a shortage of clothing, shoes, and farm tools as before."

More than ten years, nearly fifteen, have passed since the long bread lines in Petrograd picked up the paving stones and started the revolution in a desperate effort to get more food. Travelers over there now see the same bread lines, in the land where bolshevism was to end want and make everybody happy. We could feel that all the blunders of Nicholas and his Ministers did some good, perhaps, if they had ushered

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in the heaven on earth that was predicted, but to the plain, ordinary observer, we have here just one more error, as colossal as any that went before, that must be corrected before Russia's unhappy people can join in the upward march of progress.

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